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**THE HEIR OF SHERBORNE;**

**OR,**

**THE ATTAINDER.**

—

**VOL. II.**



THE  
HEIR OF SHERBORNE;


OR,

THE ATTAINDER.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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# THE ATTAINDER.

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## CHAPTER I.

### THE RETURN HOME.

THE Duchess of Buckingham was seated at her spinning-wheel in her closet—for so was the boudoir of modern days entitled—in York House. A book of devotion, on which many a tear had from time to time been shed by the high-born, but oftentimes unhappy Katharine Villiers, lay on her knee, a half-finished letter was on a table near her.

Elizabeth Throckmorton was leaning over the high-backed chair on which her patroness was seated. Her eyes rested, however, not on the quickly-turning wheel, spinning round the deli-

cate fibres of the fine thread which the Duchess was drawing out from the hemp. Although there was much in the delicacy and beauty of the taper fingers, much in the musing attitude of the head, and in the ineffably feminine appearance of the graceful spinner at her ivory wheel to attract interest, they were directed earnestly towards the far-off turning of the road, towards the west, which might then distinctly be seen from the windows of York House.

Both of these ladies were engrossed by their own thoughts ; when suddenly the Duchess turned round, and said :

“ What, a sigh, Elizabeth ! Thou—thou canst surely have nothing to sigh for ? ”

“ Not in my gracious mistress’s service,” replied Elizabeth. “ But—”

“ Elizabeth, there is always a ‘ but ’ in thy asseverations of contentment now-a-days. One would think,” added the Duchess, half playfully, half sadly, “ that thou wert married to a great Duke, who neglected thee, and preferred another.”

“ My dear mistress,” exclaimed Elizabeth, kneeling down before the Duchess, and respect-

fully taking the hand which now, having pushed away the spinning-wheel, lay, white almost as the ivory itself, upon it, "sure, if any wife be blest, thou art that one. Your lord, so famed in all Europe for his power and greatness; your fortunes so high! Ah! methinks it were much, to be wedded to one whose destiny it hath been almost to rule this kingdom, and at whose displeasure all tremble."

"Thou ambitious one!" said the Duchess, smiling; "how little thy desires accord with mine. Give me the good heart, the steady parts, not poised too high; then let me have retirement—peace; my children to love me, my *plaisance* to delight me, easy days, far from cities, and show, and sights,"—she added, with a sudden burst of tears, "without this ever-returning, heart-aching dread of coming ruin, in which he, my Villiers, will be hurled headlong from his pre-eminence."

The Duchess arose as she spoke, and wiped the tears from her eyes, and said more calmly, looking at the half-finished epistle on her writing-table:

"I could not finish that letter. His enemies are busy at work: I could well set them at

defiance, were he but true to himself and to me. Yes, Elizabeth, thou marvellest, but 'tis a true—a too true tale. 'Tis not the first time that I have had to forgive ~~slights~~—grave injuries, which ~~were~~ administered, strange to say, by one who yet loveth me well—and I shall have to forgive again. While my lord abided in Spain," resumed the Duchess, in a tone between reproach and sorrow, "I, at home, had the hard task to stop slanderous tongues: it was my part to combat foes, to keep together friends—and how was I requited?"

"Yet, my Lord Duke loveth you as his life," argued Elizabeth.

"I believe it, when we are together. But he is comely, very comely, Elizabeth—a perfect marvel to the admiring world; and there is now one, high in station, great in power, to whom his proud heart doth bend itself."

"And yet," rejoined her humble friend, "her beauty is not such as may eclipse that of my gracious mistress."

"Ah, Elizabeth! a wife's charms sink sadly in the balance against a Queen's. But 'tis not meet, even to thee to talk upon such matters—duty enforceth silence. Besides, to me,

I know his heart is, in the main, honest. Were she but less witty, less fair—and less *frail*,” she continued, lowering her voice, “she, the Queen of all hearts in a wanton court, I could hope that he would return to me as heretofore—sinning, yet repentant; but the temptation may prove, this time, too potent. But, said I not ’twas wrong to discourse on such themes? Pr’ythee, tell me—for in the cares of others methinks I find solace—what news of Beaumont?”

“Madam, he hath been sent for—apprehended, and will be put under guard until the event of Sir Robert Howard’s life or death be known. My warning to him, writ with your Grace’s approval, went too late.”

“Yes; but,” answered the Duchess—“how my poor head hath failed me! yesternight came an order for Master Beaumont, that he should remove for the present to his father’s house in Leicestershire. My Lord Chief Justice hath interceded for him. Knowest thou a trusty messenger who will convey to Master Francis a message and this letter from me, and incite him withal—for I fear he lacketh prudence—to go on his way at once.”

"My cousin," replied Elizabeth, quickly, "oweth obligations to Master Beaumont, and will gladly do such behests as may serve him. I will, with your Grace's permission, send to him."

"Thou mayst do so—and add, Elizabeth, that the names he beareth—Villiers—Beaumont—are hateful to many, and may warp the convictions against him. God grant he may not suffer—at all events, the loss of a hand, or branding, or heavy fines—which he, poor youth, can ill afford to pay—and must therefore pay with loss of liberty; for our impoverished coffers will not yield so many marks as they may impose.

"Bid my maidens come to me," added the Duchess, suddenly recollecting herself, "for I have to pay respects and duty to my lady-mother to-day; then, to visit and propitiate as I can the Duchess of Lenox; next, to see my Lady Hatton—for all these dowagers can be furies if I neglect them; and our game, Elizabeth, lieth not so high that I can afford one friend the less."

Elizabeth, assuring her Grace that she should quickly return to her, sped down the corridor

and entering her own closet, there wrote a few lines to her cousin, beseeching his aid. They had not met since the day of Lady Purbeck's wedding at Hampton Court, and in any other case Elizabeth would have hesitated before she wrote to claim the services of one who appeared to her to be already engrossed in the prosecution of his own interests.

"'Tis true," Elizabeth often thought, "that I can befriend him not. He doth well, after the world's fashion, to avoid me. Have I not counselled him so to do? and wherefore am I vexed?"

Her heart throbbed, as, after an hour's interval—after performing all her duties to the Duchess, and seeing her beautiful but unhappy mistress enter, in all state, the splendid coach and six, by which her Duke had already made more enemies than by all his graver acts of rapacity and arrogance, she returned—having been advised that her cousin awaited her there—to her own chamber.

As she stopped at the door of her chamber, and fancied that Carew Raleigh might be there, she trembled; but, after a moment's reflection, she went in. He was not there; but in a few



minutes a servant entered, saying that Master Raleigh was awaiting her below. Elizabeth, somewhat surprised at this arrangement, descended, and soon found herself in one of the many chambers of York House, appointed for the private reception of suitors and visitants. Carew was standing in a musing attitude, and started when he saw her. In the eagerness of the moment she forgot to note the changed appearance of her relative. His threadbare coat was now exchanged for a suit of the finest velvet, rich but plain, and fashioned in the newest mode of the day. A collar of delicate lace fell over his shoulders; and the hat, which lay on a table near him, though not graced by a feather, was looped up with gold. His whole dress was black; but Charles I. had recently introduced the custom of wearing garments of that colour, and the most fashionable men of his court—Buckingham, for instance—soon adopted a hue so becoming and so modish.

“Carew,” said Elizabeth, eagerly, “I would fain have spoken to you in my privy chamber; but since thou art here, I can as well enter upon the theme I have at heart,

here. Yet wherefore came you not to my closet?"

"My dear cousin," replied Carew, kindly, but formally, "it is best we should meet here. Were I often to be admitted to thy chamber, there might be those who would marvel at our intimacy."

"I do not understand," replied Elizabeth, colouring slightly, "why folk should marvel, or why," she added, fixing her eyes on those of her cousin, and drawing herself up—for a painful idea flashed across her mind—"even if they did marvel, how that could harm either of us. We are kinsfolk; we have been bred up under the same roof—by the same care; but that—" she suddenly checked herself, "is little to the purpose. I came here to serve one to whom, cousin Raleigh, thou art well affected."

She paused for a reply, or for a word of encouragement to proceed; but though Carew looked steadfastly at her, he was silent.

"Thou knowest," she went on to say, "the history of this sad *rencontre*, nigh to Kingston, and of its consequence. Sir Robert Howard, folk declare, is dangerously ill. Thank Heaven! Master Beaumont is innocent of any pre-

meditated attack on that ill-starred young gentleman ! But yet, cousin Raleigh, times are such, and justice is so scantily to be had, even for the good, that this true-hearted, this brave Beaumont may pay a heavy penalty for what seemeth to me more a mischance than a misdeed."

"Thou art pleased to be mightily concerned for Master Beaumont," remarked Raleigh, with some bitterness in his tone.

"I am indeed concerned for him," rejoined Elizabeth, gravely, "because he hath ever been concerned for others. Thou mayst smile, cousin ; but I speak in all seriousness, not with the vanity of a foolish girl. Himself a young aspirant to fortune, endowed with parts, not devoid of ambition, he hath never forgotten the lowly in his career. I speak, perhaps," she added, after awaiting in vain from Carew for some responsive praise, "with the greater surety that, whilst many fairer, greater, richer, would fain have enticed him to pay court to them, he hath never forgot thy poor cousin ; nor taught her to remember, by neglect or lack of courtesy, her lowly fortunes."

"Fairer there could not well be, Elizabeth ;

nor many of more honourable birth than thou," returned Carew, colouring as if he felt—and may he not have felt?—some sting to himself in that artless encomium.

Yet in the simplicity of her heart Elizabeth had spoken; for as yet she read not the heart of her kinsman, nor would she, had she known of all that was working therein, have descended to carry any but a direct reproof to him. She was, intellectually, too high for any littleness and, morally, too good to cherish suspicion.

"Well," she replied, averting her face from the peculiar glance which was fixed upon it, "think on that as thou wilt. I know he wished *thee* well; at all events, he wants friends, and we can assist him. My gracious mistress hath desired me to say to you, that yesternight came an order for Master Beaumont to repair to his father's house at Goadby, in Leicestershire. Despatch is of importance; for, meanwhile, should Sir Robert Howard die, other steps may be taken; and, Carew, thou knowest what it is to be incarcerated in that dismal Tower! Day after day—hopelessly—left there perchance, and forgot by all but the bleeding hearts of kinsfolk; and—"

"And lovers," interrupted Raleigh. "Yes, I *do* know. I will go—believe me, Elizabeth—and take horse this very moment."

"I am certain," said Elizabeth, eagerly, "that the master of the Duke's stud will give you his best steeds, with relays. I am rarely refused anything in this house; and if I ask for Master Beaumont, nothing!"

"Stop!" said Carew, arresting her progress to the door, "my horses await me in the court. You start with surprise—it is true. And it will seem better to the world, that I should not be indebted to the Duke of Buckingham for my equipments. Thou wilt know in time," he added, gravely, "thy cousin's good fortune."

"I shall believe it," replied Elizabeth, who, with the shrewdness of one long accustomed to study the few characters with whom she had passed her childhood, perfectly understood the sanguine and scheming characteristics of her relatives, Sir Walter Raleigh and his son, "when I see thee at Sherborne."

"And that thou wilt assuredly; but it is not meet that we should remain parleying too long, Elizabeth. It hath been said," and Carew bent

his eyes on the ground as he spoke, "that we were once—once affianced. Such rumours—"

"Proceed!" said Elizabeth, in a voice broken by emotion: "such rumours, thou wouldst say, may mar thy promotion. No, cousin Raleigh, stoop not to explain, nor to vex my poor heart by professions to which I will not listen. Farewell!"

She turned from him, and quitted the room.

Carew was left to his own reflections. They were bitter enough; but they were endurable—and endured. The sacrifice was to be made. Since his last interview with his cousin, a week had alone passed; but a long history in man's destiny is oftentimes comprised in a week. He had been sent for by Lord Purbeck and encouraged in his hopes of a restoration in blood. But the "sinews of war," the means to obtain access to the King, and the funds by which a more advantageous exterior could be achieved, were to be furnished at any price.

An unknown friend—known, at all events, to Lady Raleigh only—had generously supplied the means. Carew was not, however, so degraded as to accept these, except under the colour of a loan, with hopes of speedy repayment. To win

back Sherborne was his dearest wish—it was his life, his existence. A friendless man, without influence, with no prosperous connexions to push him onwards, has every obstacle to contend with. The path to honours ran, in those days, parallel often with the road to Hymen's temple. A rich marriage, or the reputation of such a possibility, was one means of propping up a ruined house, especially if its representative were a young man of goodly appearance, and of an engaging address.

At all events, it was important that no previous entanglement should be thought to fetter the pretensions of Carew Raleigh, whose graces of mind and manner, combined with the good offices of his humble cousin, were now progressively winning for him the favour of the courtly world.

As Carew Raleigh mounted his horse, and prepared to depart, he cast a long and wistful look to the part of the building where he believed his cousin's chamber was seated. His face was pale and thoughtful, and the question: "Is the thing to be achieved worth all this pain?" arose, perhaps, to his mind.

## CHAPTER II.

## GOADBY.

SOME weeks had elapsed after the incidents thus related, and even during that short space fresh changes (for when is not the course of this world's events not changing?) had wrought upon the destinies of the various actors in that brief time, in which England, in the days of Charles I. enjoyed a delusive tranquillity.

The Duke of Buckingham, mad with revelry and pomp, and praise and power, and blazing like a meteor, to which he was compared by his contemporaries, was absorbed, not by the politics of France, not by the intellectual influence of Richelieu, not even by the delight of surpassing



his rivals and of irritating his foes, but by the dangerous fascinations of a regal coquette. This was his last bright dream of pleasure, for his destiny was already overcast with portentous clouds; and a dire tragedy, the catastrophe of which was precipitated by his own rashness, was soon to close that comet-like, perilous, eccentric career.

Carew Raleigh was at Court favoured by the King, yet his suit still in abeyance. None knew better than Charles I. how to blind others to his real intentions. As we have before said, there had never been in his mind the hearty goodwill and sympathy towards Sir Walter Raleigh which Prince Henry had felt. Charles, nevertheless, appreciated the memory of the great philosopher of the Tower, and for the sake of that name encouraged his son to hover round the Court; yet still Sherborne was not given back, and the restoration in blood was a thing talked of, not granted.

Lord Purbeck was at his country-seat: his bright days of revelry were now a by-gone remembrance to his former comrades in the masque, or partners at the gaming-table. Once the gayest of the gay, he was now heard of no

more, except as "poor Purbeck," who was gone to plant cabbages and grow hay at Stoke ; whilst his fair wife, loathing his very presence, had again taken up her abode in Hatton House.

His debts had been paid ; the beauty of the Court was his ; but Lord Purbeck, it was supposed, was far from happy ; and reports of his fast-sinking health, and worse, of his unsettled intellect, began to be circulated among his intimate *friends*—that band of censors, whose combined compassion is always to be dreaded by the erring or unfortunate.

The Duchess of Buckingham and Elizabeth were awaiting in seclusion at New Hall the return of the Duke. But where was Francis Beaumont ?

Three weeks had elapsed after the accident which had made so unlucky an interruption to his good fortune. He was at Goadby.

Home is the word dearest to an Englishman's heart : it had always held its full influence over that of Beaumont. He returned to it, a stricken, if not a disgraced member of the numerous and poor family of which he was the eldest born.

One day—it was a chill and rainy morning—and he was sitting in his father's study alone,

when the approach of fox-hounds, and the loud voices of the huntsmen, and the baying of dogs, called all the inhabitants of the house forth to witness the great event of the day.

Instantly, the small space before the low-browed parsonage house was almost covered by a crew of half-clad boys, interspersed with a masculine looking girl or two—the brothers and sisters of the handsome Beaumont. The boys were dressed like ploughboys, and their loud voices, large red hands, shock heads of hair, and Leicestershire accent, kept up the characteristics of the rural, rather than the gentle, class to which they by birth belonged.

They were vociferous; and the girls also, in their enthusiasm, at the excitement of the chase, joined—not only Jack and Will, but Madge and Letty—in loud halloos, as the dauntless hunters swept by, the vision of a moment, and disappeared in the lane near which the residence of old Geoffrey Beaumont, clerk, was situated.

All this noise subsided into a few gruff expressions from the boys at being sent off to school by some mysterious voice behind—probably the troubled Rector—and into a good deal of squealing and chattering between the girls, at

being called in to help at the wash, of the crisis of which proofs might be seen to the left—to the right—on every rose-bush and hedge-row.

Strange did it seem to the two pretty rosy-faced little maidens, Magdalen and Lettice, to see “that dolt Francis” poring over his book, or gazing into the wood fire, when the hunt passed by; and they tarried a moment to look in at the window, and to thump against the lattice with fat red fists, to arouse their strange brother from his reverie.

They succeeded — Francis looked up, and smiled: it was rarely that he smiled now, although even his young sisters could remember days in which he was always smiling; but those days pass away with all of us, and with Francis they appeared to have ended early.

Finding, however, that a smile and a wave of the hand to bid them go away, were all the signs of notice that they obtained, the little ones trotted off, and their brother’s head sank upon his book again.

Yet he did not read—he could not read: the mind was too harassed and feverish to settle. Miserable as he had been at Kingston, the suspense of the last fortnight had been far more

thorough wretchedness to one who believed himself to have committed homicide. He was always expecting news that came not, always anticipating that something was going to happen, and finding that his days ended in nothing.

Then the contrast. He came back to a home where he had once been congenial with others, and others with him. But he was like the plant which the naturalist tears up from the mountain soil, and takes into a careful and luxurious keeping. It cannot be restored to its mountain, it droops there and expires even into the native soil to which it has become foreign. All was changed in that home, save one sad remembrance.

His father came in, hale and calm, and instantly Francis started to his feet. A troop of dogs, generally lying about in the house place, terriers, spaniels, lurchers, came in too. The Rector's dress was farmer-like, with a touch of the reverend in it : he wore a black velvet night-cap, which topped an expansive, unwrinkled forehead, and a full cambric cravat, with long ends. But there the ghostly characteristics terminated. A leathern doublet, with a surcoat

of stout fustian, buckskin breeches, and jack-boots, denoted the farmer-clerico, or clerico-farmer, whose glebe was far more looked to as the support of his family than his tithes. It was sowing time, for the autumn had commenced, and the Rector was more concerned in providing food for the body than spiritual meat and drink.

Yet he must be pardoned: hard necessity must bear the blame, not the parson. His benefice was poor, and his family large; and since Francis had quitted home last—not long before his own mishap—(oh! how little had he thought of it at the time, how much now!)—the Rector had become a widower.

Yes, that tie to home had been snapped asunder. Francis had learned the event when in the midst of preparations for the mission to France, and had had little space permitted him by his exacting patron for grief. Yet it had been a sharp pang; and elevated by the vanities around him for a time, poignantly recurring now.

“Your pleasure, Sir?” was the formal and reverential address in which Francis spoke to his father.

"My pleasure, young master, would be," returned his father, and his voice, its intonation, the finished and incorrupt accentuation, spoke still the man of education, "that thou shouldst bestir thyself, instead of loitering here by those logs, and take the gelding, and follow to the field, Sir; and be not afeard to ride along with the best of the county. Thy father's son, indeed, to sit there moping when the hunt is out! What matters it now?" he added, as he opened and shut a number of little drawers in a huge bureau, and took out and put in papers. "Say the man is dead—thou canst not bring him to life again."

"I will go, Sir, at your bidding; but—"

"There—there they go!" cried his father, in a loud key, "along by the Spinney Close. They have lost scent, I trow. Now, adown by the Morndon Hills!—away they go!" and he planted himself before the windows, his hands in his large pockets.

The sounds of the horn died away, the green-coated huntsmen were soon seen far away over the vale in the distance, and the precincts of the Rectory were left to their usual repose. Sounds from the farm-yard

alone broke upon the ear: the monotonous flail, the cheerful, exulting voices of the domestic poultry, the lowing of oxen from the huge barns, disturbed the silence, giving a pleasant impression of peace and plenty.

The Rector looked until he could discern no traces of the huntsmen, and then turning round, he fixed his eyes upon his son.

“Ah! thou art too late now to take the field,” he remarked, with a look of compassion; for the indifference and indolence, symptoms of mental depression which succeed often the first agonies of regret or remorse, were, to his paternal heart, melancholy to witness. He sighed, therefore, as he put on a huge pair of spectacles, unlocked a large coffer, fastened with iron clasps, that stood on the table, and took out some parchments, on which weary-looking technicalities were inscribed.

“I never thought to see,” the Rector resumed, “much good come of this same patronage of the great Duke. I would thou hadst been bred, Francis, to some goodly calling; to be a clerk in orders, hey! or a lawyer. Then thou couldst have helped me in two ways: thou mightest have taken the



burials and christenings off my hands ; or, being learned in the law, have assisted me in these processes and leases. But thy poor mother—so proud of her first-born !—willed it so !”

He mended a pen as he spoke, and slashed away, full of the inborn contentment which men feel when they can fairly, or unfairly, lay the burden of any unsuccessful scheme upon their wife’s shoulders—be she even relieved from all worldly responsibilities by death.

“And in her last hours, poor woman,” resumed the widower, “she thought as much, when my Lady the Countess mother turned to the Romish idolatry, to the which, as is well known, my Lord Duke is secretly affected.”

“I hope, Sir,” said Francis, in a voice of humility and respect, “that there hath been nothing in my behaviour, save this one mischance, to cause you to anger, or to make you think I am corrupted by the Court, in the which it hath been my hap to abide. Sir—father, advise, admonish me—”

“I see nought to murmur at, Francis ;

except thy unseemly, unmeasured sorrow for what may prove the ill-fate of a very unto-ward, evil-disposed young gentleman, who, as though knowest," added the Rector, in a deep and somewhat tremulous voice, "hath heretofore rendered to thee no good service. Tush, man! 'twas an accident—let it pass. It matters little to the world whether Sir Robert Howard be saved from more mischief by death, or live to be a wastrel and a profligate. Son, I have marvelled at thy grief."

"I will endeavour, Sir, to—to be happier, when once I know that he is well," said Francis.

"An if he be not? Thinkest thou that thou wilt not be let off with a summary punishment? An if thy favour at Court be quenched, and my Lord Duke refuse to take thee back, thou hast a home, Francis," pursued the Rector, stretching out his hand to his son. "I would thou hadst still a mother to welcome thee to it! but she hath no further trouble now, and needeth not our tears, God be praised!"

"Sir," cried Francis, much moved by the mingled hardihood and feeling in his father's

behaviour, and touched by the delicacy and generosity with which the poor Rector, already encumbered by a large family, sought to make him forget that he was a burden, "I have sorrowed long enough—too long. I have forgotten you and your sharper affliction—though, indeed, I forget not my mother. I seem to see her still, here—everywhere; to hear her kind voice: her spirit appeareth to hover over us."

The Rector clasped his hands, but said nothing. He bravely combatted that most trying of lots—that of a poor man left with a large family without a head, and incapable of repairing the loss, without the impossible remedy of marrying again.

"I have been ever the source of much disquiet to you, Sir," said Francis, after a long pause: "in that sad business of—"

"Name it not. Let the sorrow of that day rest. Thou wert but a boy then, and art little more now. And, albeit, the matter left me then friendless, since that Sir Phillip Howard did withdraw his favour; we have never wanted." The Rector mused for some moments. "Thou knowest the sequel of that matter?" he asked, in a low tone.

•

"I heard—the news came ere I left the University," replied Francis, in a low voice.

"Well, God knoweth what is best for us."

The Rector had now begun to write, thus to close the conversation; for he knew well the effects of an unreserved discussion of painful events. He was fully aware how it rips up the half-buried sorrow, and gives to past anguish a fresh and vivid colouring. "To give sorrow words" is in the first instance wise, because natural; but after that first ebullition, it is a very questionable relief to dwell in language upon an irremediable affliction.

"I will walk abroad, with your leave, Sir," said Francis, at last, "to Goadby, where I will do your bidding."

"Call on neighbour Wilmot there, and tell him we kill a pig this week, and will send him a gift thereof. And bid yon schoolmaster, Master Freeman, let me have his bill for my four boys' school-books. Thanks be to God and the founder, there be no sums due for the schooling, else how could a poor man fare? And pr'ythee, son, go down to Martin the wheelwright, and bid him come hither; the spoke of my waggon is broke in twain."

“And the post-bag—I can bring that too,” replied Francis, comforted to see that the details of common life so quickly resumed their hold on the Rector’s attention.

Young Beaumont gladly escaped into the village: it was a some half mile’s distance there from the rectory to the church. Times are, doubtless, changed with Goadby since the great Duke of Buckingham paced its adjacent common on his way to its free school, where he acquired those few notions of the Latin accidence, which may have served him when he became Chancellor of the University of Cambridge, at least to *read*, if he could not *comprehend*, the oration with which he returned the complimentary addresses of the learned.

As Francis issued from the garden of his father’s house, he looked back with a swelling heart at the house of his earlier years, and almost cursed his own ungrateful spirit that it had now become to him an exile. He felt the generosity of his father’s conduct the more, that everywhere around there were indications of that sort of poverty which arises out of an income too small for the position it is intended to support. The profession of a clergyman was then

still—before the Revolution—the profession of a gentleman ; but the stipends were miserable, whilst the demands of the rural poor thrown out, by the dissolution of the monasteries, from their usual sources of dependence, were such as no kind-hearted clergyman could resist ; for the provisions of the poor-law were not such then as to relieve in any adequate manner the extreme poverty of the lower classes.

Young Beaumont made his way through the churchyard. One door of the church was left open : he passed into the porch, impelled by an unutterable wish—being sad—to seek sad objects, and entered the well-known edifice. The perfect stillness of the building, disturbed alone by a swallow flapping against the rude beams of the roof—the entire repose, struck upon his spirits. He walked into the chancel, and stood before a stone tablet, garnished with cherubim at each corner, and yet surmounted (the worldly and unworldly images mingled together) by the arms of the Beaumont family.

The simple inscription commemorative of feminine virtues and a somewhat premature doom—incurred, as the monumental biography went on to say, by visiting the sick when

a desolating fever raged—the enumeration of her family alliances, which were even noble; and the pointed motto, all in Latin, had been present to young Beaumont's eyes every Sunday when he had listened, or tried to listen, to the service of the Church. Yet, on that morning they seemed to convey more meaning than they had done before. Hitherto he had mourned for himself—then he sorrowed for *her*. He would have given worlds to have seen her again—to have experienced her restoring and motherly kindness once more. Then he could have endured—what seemed to him decisive—his perpetual exile to an ungenial sphere; away, and hopelessly surrendering all that is dear to a young heart—the hope of rising, the companionship of the congenial, and the preference of one whom Beaumont now completely regarded as lost to him for ever.

These were the impressions which the sight of that monument imparted; but as he looked upon it long, and his mother, in all her affection, clad in her cheerful domestic virtues, stood, as it were, before him, he sorrowed for her *loss*. Never again in this world could he know the same gentle, exclusive, unselfish

affection, as that which a mother bears to her first-born. And then, whilst she had been struggling with a fate of poverty and every-day exertions too severe for her strength, he had been forgetting her amid luxuries and revelry. The affection which hallows the remembrance of departed relations is seldom—one may say, never—without a strong addition of remorse to its intensity of pain. For who, in this world of errors of temper and of errors of self-indulgence, journeys along side by side with another without some collisions, explained, or extenuated to the self-deceiving heart whilst those objects are spared, but raked up by memory in her harshest mood, when we can no longer give pain or pleasure, or offend, or forgive the lost friend?

“It was not that I did not love thee well, dear, dear mother,” thus Francis in fancy addressed her; “but that I loved myself—the vanities of life—too well. The love and duty which should have been all thine, were bestowed elsewhere.”

Then as he thought on some passages of his early history—how, erring wofully, and implanting in that now silent heart a pang that



must have left many a trace, she had soothed and pardoned him, and led him—oh, he felt now the pressure of her soft hand!—to his father: and yet in the bustle of the world could he have ever forgotten her?

But all these reflections were now unavailing; and Francis felt it so, for he issued out of the church, and proceeded to Goadby. Often and often had he gone in that direction to meet the post which came three times a week; and often had he returned in bitter disappointment when no news had arrived.

The path descended a little till a narrow sluggish stream, crossed by a plank, divided the glebe land from the domain appertaining to a large and somewhat stately house which lay between Goadby Church and the small market-town bearing the same name. The windows of this house were now all closed; and the deer, which had of late years not been restrained by any bounds in the surrounding park, had broken down fences, and completely obliterated every trace of the fair pleasure-grounds which had once given so cared-for and agreeable an aspect to that part of the building by which Francis now passed. It was a painful remem-

brance to him—that walk ; and he rarely, if he could avoid it, passed that way. But now, by one of those impulses that sometimes seize upon the mind with a glimmering of the future, and a half consciousness that it might be his last walk in that direction, he passed by a deviating path, the work of unbidden feet which claimed as a right the road made in the absence of its proprietors across the park ; and came almost directly before the windows of the great house.

They were scrupulously closed ; and not a vestige of a human being was visible. No dogs guarded the entrance ; no domestic birds gave life to the deep stillness of the overgrown lawns and terraces near the house. On one side, indeed, a neglected, untenanted aviary, its doors wide open, its inmates dead or flown, and their perches and drinking troughs disused, recalled to Francis many a summer day's idleness, when he had passed his lazy, unthinking hours in tormenting the rare inmates, with their glossy plumes and foreign names, in that aviary.

He walked on towards the offices and stables. The latter, a huge, unsightly building, 'not

hidden from view of the house, but unostentatiously placed within sight of it, presented to the young mind certain associations which, if not romantic, were as saddening as others. There, in the brief time when a certain family had inhabited the Hall—there had many of his boyish hours been passed. From yonder courtyard he and others had set out in many a merry pilgrimage; and the sounds of laughter even now seemed to ring in his ears. The dismantled house, the neglected garden, may bring sad images to the mind; but there is nothing that recalls more forcibly past occupation and present desertion than the absence of those usual appliances by which comfort, at least, if not state, is maintained. The vast stables, which had once held an ample stud, suitable to the high station of its owners, were now silent and empty; the court-yard was grass-grown; the great bell, which had announced the return of many a riding party to attendant grooms, was rusty. Above all, the clock had long since stopped, and there was no ministering hand to put it into motion. Time, however, had not stood still in that quarter: many of the offices were falling down from

neglect; brambles and nettles choked up the approaches on most sides; and not a trace of good order remained.

Neglect and desertion do not constitute repose. Francis stood in the court-yard, and shuddered.

“And who next,” he said to himself, “of those who once rode forth out of these courts, will be extinct?” He roused himself, and walked on. “My fault,” he reflected, “was great; my punishment has been extreme. Dear Howard,” he exclaimed aloud, “would that I had died instead! Not so, not *so*,” he thought, as he looked once more at the often and well-remembered scene, “should it thus have ended!”

He hurried out across the long, waving grass, growing rank and uncut in what were once fields, beyond the park, and soon perceived the village of Goadby. A low village ale-house was then the depository of the post-bags. That appropriated to the Rector of Goadby was lying on the table as Francis entered the low and rude building. He seated himself on the settle by the fire, and unlocking the bag, took out the letters: one of these was addressed

to himself. As he read, the bright flames played upon his countenance. It was at first pale, and his lips quivered; but as he proceeded the deepest flush spread over it. He fetched a deep sigh, and the words, "Thank God! thank God!" were uttered in great emotion.

"Master Francis," said the host, coming forward from an inner room, "what news the day? Is Master Robert sound again?"

"He is well, Thomas. Do not speak to me; I must needs go to my father. And yet, Thomas," said Beaumont, as he was rushing out at the door, "perchance I may not see thee again. This much, therefore, know: Sir Robert Howard is well, and I am a free man. Farewell."

He hastened out. The ready, "Good Lord!" "Good lack!" and "God be wi' you!" of the poor people, whom he had known from his childhood as honest parishioners of his father's—their servants once—were lost upon him. In a few minutes he had retraced his steps, and had passed into the park.

It was desolate as heretofore, but he could bear the desolation. The curse was recalled; the brand was not affixed to his name: he

could go forth to society, and feel that no man had died by his hand. He could return to his proper sphere, to his aims and hopes. How joyously he passed the place where his heavy steps had lingered, half an hour since. Once he turned round, and looked at the old house. There were other associations with it besides those connected with Howard. For a moment his brow darkened ; then he waved his hand, as if to take a last farewell of all that had pleased or pained him there.

“ I have sorrowed enough,” he said. “ God hath forgiven me, though man cannot !”

The old Rector came forth from his parlour to meet his son. He asked for the “ London Mercury,” for he had so often seen Francis return disappointed after his visits to Goadby, that he cared not to inflict pain by inquiring whether any letter had arrived. Many times had the young man come back drooping, and almost speechless, and passed the rest of the day in a desponding silence. But now he walked erect, and looked up at his father and said:

“ Your blessing, Sir. All is well !”

“ God hath then heard our prayers,” said the

Rector. "He hath chastened, but not quenched that proud spirit."

"But," resumed Francis, hesitatingly, "I must go hence: my Lord Duke wills that I follow him to France."

His father turned away. The unhappy son had grown dearer to him than his other children. The educated mind and heart, (for the heart goes along with the opened faculties, and is oft-times, if not always, the more expanded as they are opened); the noble nature, and the companionship which younger children could not give, had fastened close bonds between the father and the son.

"Speak not of it this night," he said, as Francis followed him, "the tithes in kind are to come in before sunset. I—and thou wilt help me once more."

## CHAPTER III.

## RUEIL.

THE Castle of Rueil, formed by Cardinal Richelieu from a simple country house into a residence so stately as to excite the jealousy of his Sovereign, has long since been demolished. Of its celebrated gardens only a chestnut-tree remains. Of its magnificent interior, the sole vestiges are a few scattered pieces of furniture, so costly as sufficiently to attest the long-forgotten splendour of the whole. Its cascades, its grottoes, and fish-ponds; its pavilions, and its tennis-court; its majestic alleys of chestnut-trees (the first ever planted in France), under which the great minister, in all his pomp of glory, permitted the poor and the rich alike to rest; are now nowhere to be traced. Its walls and fortifi-



cations, even its *oubliettes* have been swept off from that pleasant country, fruitful in the vine, and cultivated by a laborious and thriving race, in which stood once the Castle of Rueil. One wing alone long survived the wreck which time and revolution had effected. Until not many years ago, it also fell into the hands of the spoiler. Then the old park was sold, the remaining trees were cut down, the walks erased, and even the groves of laurel-trees were offered to public sale, that their leaves might deck the brows of the popular leaders of the revolutionary party of the day.

When Richelieu, in all the majesty—for luxury even is too poor a word—that surrounded him, received in stately hospitality the Duke of Buckingham, Rueil, one of three castles that adorned the neighbourhood, stood near the town which bears the same name, the very walls of which were levelled to allow space for its magnificent gardens. A large Italian villa, with a balcony running along the centre, then presented itself to view ; and the *parterres* to the right and to the left ; the fish-pond and cascade in front ; fine umbrageous trees, and well-placed statues, seemed the accompaniments of peace and secu-

rity. Not so, alas ! Around about fosses, wide and deep—for the Cardinal maintained in this villa-castle the luxury of a noble with the precautions of a garrison—amid the delicious sound of *jets d'eau*, and the music of the birds, and the accents of merry voices, and the sounds of many a clock, was mingled the noise of soldiers exercising ; and the watchword startled many a loiterer in that well-guarded scene of courtly revelry. Nay, more ; sometimes the voice of anguish fell upon the ear, as the prisoner was carried off to the dread *oubliette* beneath the castle—Richelieu, all-powerful to capture, all-sufficient to condemn, alone cognizant of the offence and of the doom.

It was many days after Beaumont had quitted London, that he reached that remarkable spot where the favourite of Louis XIII. entertained the favourite of Charles I. The young man, summoned as he was by his kinsman at once to attend his person, and to share his secrets—for in no one else the Duke dared to confide—went not alone to France. Many were the great and gay who, wearied of the propriety of their own Court, repaired to Paris at that time of festivity.

A well-appointed company of young Englishmen therefore joined together at Paris, and rode towards the Castle of Rueil; and among them was Carew Raleigh—whom, at Lord Purbeck's request, the Duke had constituted, for the time, one of his band of "young gentlemen."

It was scarcely daybreak when this gay and happy troop quitted Paris. The spirits of Beaumont were high. He had passed through a great ordeal, not only innocently, but mercifully. That he saw the hand of Providence in this, he felt; for the youth was well nurtured; and in those days religion was, in England, in some families, more strictly inculcated than at any later period. He was therefore jocund as the blithe lark that sang above his head.

Raleigh was calmly thoughtful; but interested in all around him. His was the accomplished mind. Devereux, and Endymion Porter enjoyed the laugh and the song, and the jest to every passing milkmaid, or the flippant remark on the dancer or singer of the last night's play; for they had been abiding in Paris whilst Buckingham with a diminished retinue had visited Rueil. Then Endymion told his old stories

about Spain, where he had attended the Duke; joked wickedly about certain Donna Elviras and Donna Marias; and showed off in that style which gay men of middle age, and of his stamp, delight to do in the company of the young.

“I would, Master Raleigh,” he said, as they went slowly along the *pavé*, and tried to catch the apples as they hung ripe and red from the trees which formed the avenue of the road, “I would thou hadst seen that rare creature, the Infanta — the Prince Charles’s first love. Oh, she excelleth far her sister, Queen Anne, in my esteem; and the Prince— Lord pardon me!—the King was madly taken with her.”

“And yet left her?”

“Ay, Master Raleigh; state policy, you know, hath stronger bonds than love.”

“Oh,” replied Carew, smiling, “there are a thousand bonds stronger than a man’s first fancy—for fancy it is, truly, when men are but boys, as thy Prince was.”

“And yet,” returned Endymion, after some reflection, “his Majesty may do worse. His heart was warm then; and this young Princess,

whom all the world commendeth, hath been bred up by 'the Queen-mother'—a Medici."

"The better will she able to aid her royal mate in state-craft," said Carew.

"Not so thought your father," replied Endymion, taking from his pocket a little book. "These," he said, looking at Carew, "are thy poor father's remains. For my soul, I durst not in King James's time have carried them about with me as I do now. But what saith that great man—thy progenitor? 'A Prince ought so to order himself that he be loved and revered of the people.' Thinkest thou that a Medici could teach him *that*? 'So need he fear no home conspiracies or foreign invasion, if he be greatly loved of his own people.' Think you a Medici *will* teach him *that*?"

"But the Spanish power—"

"Is so far removed from our English *politique* that we need not to have feared it. But France, our near neighbour—Alack! alack! I dare say no more."

Carew looked at the man in whom long service to the great had not dulled observation, nor destroyed freedom of thought. Eccentric

almost to wildness in appearance, the poet over-mastered the courtier. His attire was careless, and yet smart; and a mingled conceit and good nature, rakishness and honesty, amused those who knew Endymion Porter at one moment—revolted them the next.

“I would we were well out of France,” Endymion rejoined confidentially to Beaumont. “That simpleton, Balthasar Gerbier, hath so written to my Lord Duke of the splendours of the Palais Cardinal, that my patron will ruin himself rather than that York House should lack the like appurtenances. What with vaunting of this great house, and of yon great gallery—of the chimney-pieces in the Hotel de Chevreuse—of the finery of the apparel, too—our Duke will not have a groat left.”

“He is already deeply, deeply indebted,” said Francis, gravely.

“I expect,” cried Carew, “that York House will be brought to sale in *our* time.”

“God forbid that any harm should hap to him!” ejaculated Francis, fervently.

“For we all sail in the same boat,” said Endymion: “but here come we to our goal.”

Rueil, indeed, was in view. Pleasant, rather than stately in aspect, it was seen beyond a straight canal. At the end near which the horsemen rested was a large square sheet of water, on the brink of which they remained for some moments to observe the triple columns of water which rose out of the centre of the pool, and ascending to an immense height, fell tinged with prismatic colours into the vast basin. Nor were they the only persons who watched the glittering wonder. Villagers, half frightened by the magic of the cascades ; the overflowing of the crowds of servants collected within the château ; poets, who basked in the patronage of the great protector of letters ; painters, who were embellishing their pieces with sketches from the gardens ; and musicians, unemployed at that hour, who composed the Cardinal's orchestra, were seated on the grass, or lounging about the walks. All was talk, gallantry, and that sort of national habit which is only to be expressed by the word *flâner*, and which of old, as in modern days, characterized that gay and fascinating people, was here to be seen in its perfection.

The Englishmen, however, had been obliged

to deliver their passes before they could cross a wide moat, and pass a drawbridge, and enter the enchanted region wherein pleasure was defended by power.

Directly in front of them, at the extremity of a broad gravel walk, appeared the great cascade, the wonder of those far-famed gardens. A flight of steps displayed the extraordinary contrivance of a series of small *jets d'eau*, one on each step, whilst at the base three larger jets threw up their sparkling drops in the noon-day sun : to the right, to the left, statues of warriors and sages graced the scene : a plantation of trees beyond the great cascade formed a background to the wonder thus achieved by hydraulic powers.

Endymion loudly applauded ; but Carew's better taste revolted against the somewhat gewgaw adornment.

"A baby-show," he remarked, with a sneer ;  
"unworthy of the great fancy of Le Notre."

"Methinks," said Endymion, whose capacious temper could ill brook the sarcastic smile which accompanied these words, "'tis pity that Master Raleigh hath not the occasion to show



his own conceptions of what a garden should be, and to inform us lesser folk."

"There I agree with you, Master Endymion," returned Carew, haughtily, a frown darkening his brow; "but 'tis not my fortune—"

"Come, come," cried Francis, "why linger we here? My Lord Duke awaits us impatiently: he knoweth what letters I bear."

"True," said Endymion; "yet, if my Lord Duke hath a game at tennis to play out, or a pair of bright eyes to look into, thy letters will keep, good Master Beaumont."

"We all know," said Carew, his lip curling, as they rode towards the house, "that few men there be so loving to their wives as Master Endymion is to his spouse, Mistress Olive."

"I would, Master Raleigh," replied Endymion, keeping down a boiling spirit, "that thou hadst as good a spouse, and as true."

"See, see," cried Francis, "the pavilion whereof my Lord hath writ to us at home so exact an account, in the which this great minister doth pass many an hour in converse on business, even of state."

"And who," asked Carew, stopping short,

“is that remarkable personage who is coming forth in deep meditation, as it seemeth, towards us?”

“It is, as I conceit,” replied Endymion, “the Father Joseph. Silence, oh my masters, for this man is the soul incarnate of the great Richelieu.”

“So,” remarked Carew, “favourites have their favourites: Richelieu his, the Duke—”

“Sir,” cried little Endymion, “not a word about his Grace, I pray you!”

The party were, however, silenced at this moment by the closer appearance of what seemed to them a Capuchin friar.

Travellers who have been passing through a continental town, full of gaily-dressed figures, and displaying *life* in all its varieties, may remember how startling is their first sight of the monastic costume, and of the stout, portly men, oftentimes in the full vigour of their days, who are generally seen to wear it. The being, abstracted from all the cares and hopes of ordinary costume, comes to us as the tenant of another state of society—almost of another world. He emerges from the door of his conventual home into a society in which he has no part, and

returns thither into a community which is wholly separated from *our* communion.

Some idea, by the generality of those who have made such observations, may therefore be formed of the sensations which the aspect of a man, not much past middle life, clad in the Capuchin cloak, wearing the scull cap above a brow scarcely yet wrinkled, a cord around his waist, reaching even to his bare and sandalled feet, a cross, worked in the dark serge dress, on his left side, and this garb worn, as in ordinary attire, amid parterres of flowers, and cascades and grottos—amid sculptured nymphs and Bacchantes; and more—not far apart was the graceful figure which approached in this guise, from gay groups of courtiers, who, as the Englishmen came nearer the château, were visible in the powdered wigs, laced ruffles, gorgeously embroidered waistcoats, and all the other finery of the age—the licentious, luxurious age of Louis XIII.

Unconscious, as it might seem, of all around him, Father Joseph calmly walked along the road on which the strangers were riding leisurely towards the court-yard. He held in his hand a small book, on which his eyes

were not so much fixed as that a glance upwards directed to the strangers, did not afford them a glimpse of the remarkable countenance which passed by, and left its impression for a lifetime, perhaps, on the mind of the observer.

His figure was tall and slender, but his gait dignified. Noble features, somewhat aquiline, corresponded in character to a vast and intellectual forehead. In the perfect serenity of the finely-curved mouth, and in the softness which subdued the brilliancy of his dark and speaking eyes, no traces could be at first discerned of that profound duplicity, of that saturnine temper which the world attributed to the confessor, the secretary, the familiar spirit of Cardinal Richelieu. Yet that mild glance, ere it was withdrawn, fixed itself on the memory of the heart as something more than "passeth show"—something that penetrated into the secret soul of him who came under its scrutiny.

The three Englishmen stood aside, uncapped, as he passed. Raleigh was the first to break the deep silence which ensued, when Father Joseph, crossing himself as he beheld heretics, passed into one of the green alleys

near at hand, and resumed the perusal of his book.

"I remembered him," whispered Endymion, (as if even the chestnut-trees might hear) "as the Grand Seigneur Mafflée, some fifteen years ago, whom all did pay court unto. He had even presented himself at the Court of our great Elizabeth; served also, and signalized himself in arms, under the Duc de Montmorency, whilst yet a boy; then at nineteen, the world yet smiling upon him, he did profess himself a monk. Some say, *la belle passion* drove him to the remedy which religion is like to give to the bruised spirit."

"Your talk doth interest me greatly," said Beaumont, earnestly.

"Call it rather superstition," interposed Carew.

"Well, my friend," rejoined the Court chronicler, honest Endymion, peevishly, "grant it so—I am no friend to ascetics; yet 'tis fit we allow some credit to the Father Joseph, inasmuch as his struggles with his passion were long and fierce—his agonies intense: many were the transient triumphs of his faith—many the relapses. But the cross—or if thou wilt,

my friend, the superstitions of monkery—have prevailed. I could tell ye, my masters, a volume of his history—how he fought against corruption; how he became a poor Capuchin, passing through towns into the remotest corners of France, preaching, exhorting, converting and suffering; how the Cardinal de Richelieu met him on the occasion of the reform of Fontevault; how—but here come we to the stables, and our horses are weary. Behold the Cardinal's litter, and his body coach. He hath taken the air betimes, methinks."

All now was bustle and occupation; but in the stable court there were those who looked idly on, but whose appearance gave a strange character to the place. A company of gendarmes were seen exercising in an outer court to the left, whilst on the right was a small *caserne*, appropriated to the two hundred *mousquetaires* on foot, and to the company of *chevaux légers* whom the King had given as a guard to the Cardinal, and whom his Eminence kept and maintained in his own pay.

For not all the revelries and elegancies of the Court, nor the munificence of the Cardinal, could check the intrigues which broke out

eventually with such powerful force; nor could his power, stupendous as it seemed, suppress the deep hatred of his foes, nor turn aside the dark conspiracies which were incessantly formed against his life.

## CHAPTER IV.

## ANNE OF AUSTRIA.

THE château of Rueil was full of visitors, both English and French. The King and Queen occupied the apartments usually reserved for them in that *maison de campagne*, the resource of Louis before the erection of Versailles. The important business of dinner had just commenced: the four tables, appropriated to persons of different stations, which the sumptuous Cardinal maintained, were overcrowded with guests; and the young Englishmen were glad to find room at the table of thirty covers assigned to gentlemen of condition within the Cardinal's service.

At his own particular table, arranged for a



party of fourteen persons, the Cardinal rarely sat ; for, independent of the painful and unceasing maladies which devoured his frame, there seemed to his affrighted imagination a sword ever suspended over his head, a dagger ever ready to strike.\* The man for whom every luxury was spread, could not partake of them in tranquillity.

Beaumont and Carew, after dining, and changing their travelling dresses into gala suits, repaired to that wing of the château in which their patron was lodged.

The magnificence of the rooms through which they passed was marvellous, even to those who knew well York House and Whitehall. They walked through chambers hung with Gobelin tapestry, and lingered to admire the celebrated piece depicting Antony and Cleopatra, surrounded with a rich border of flowers : this, a wreck of former grandeur, is still to be seen in a private house at Rueil. They stood before the well-known table now deposited in the Louvre, and adorned by a fine mosaic ; they lingered to admire a fair

\* "Il avait quatre tables dans son palais, et il n'y mangeait pas."—*Aubery*.

visitant of the château, supposed to be one of the Guises, whose exquisite form was sculptured as Minerva; they wondered at the pictures, and marvelled at the vast number of painters who had met with employment and patronage by the Cardinal's bounty (and yet Poussin had refused to share those advantages). They arrived at length, full of admiration, in the ante-chamber of the gilded and luxurious *salon* in which the Duke of Buckingham enjoyed those fleeting days of unbounded prosperity.

The Duke was in the hands of those servants who especially attended at his toilet; for the rich but moderately adorned suit which had been worn at dinner was now to be exchanged for one better adapted for the evening's festivities. The mind of the favourite was so full of the present objects, his heart so exulting with pride and vanity, and every instant so occupied by business or pleasure, that the Englishmen were obliged to wait for many moments for admittance.

Endymion had preceded them, and was waiting in the ante-chamber. Hitherto he had

been as an equal in the journey ; but, arrived at Rueil, the little poet relapsed into the groom of the chamber. The kindly Beaumont and the blunt, honest-hearted, merry Devereux would fain have allowed no such difference to be observed ; but Raleigh thought otherwise. He was all courtesy, but it was the courtesy of condescension.

“ I know not when ye will be admitted,” said Endymion, “ for his Grace hath had twenty suits before him, and cannot choose one. I commended the green uncut velvet ; but the Duc de Chevreuse and his Duchess have appeared in black suits, wrought with gold.”

“ The handsomest in the universe,” said Raleigh.

“ Perchance, Master Raleigh. So his Grace is mad after the same, or somewhat wholly differing. *I* counsel his white watered and silver, which he wore at the entrance.”

“ Too like a birth-day suit, Master Endymion.”

“ Oh, let his Grace wear what he affecteth ; he will be finer than all his compeers,” cried Beaumont.

Whilst thus they discussed this all-important point, they were welcomed to the Duke's presence.

"Welcome, Beaumont, right welcome," cried Buckingham, "And thou bringest good tidings of my—of the Duchess? A letter from her! I have scarce time to read it—for—thou hast heard, perchance, the bruit of the honour prepared for me, Francis? The epistle, I see, is not long—a play is to be enacted this night to glorify thy master—but what saith Kate?"

The Duke, as he thus spoke, tore open the seal of a letter from his wife, and impetuously and hurriedly glanced at the contents, commenting as he went on.

"'Many hard upon the French mission.' Very like! 'There be those that say that gold eno' was spent in the Spanish Treaty!' That's an old, though an o'ertrue tale. 'And as to thy having the Crown jewels to adorn thee, dear heart, folk say—' This is too much. What! cannot his Majesty, if he please it, bedeck his poor servant with such baubles as these?" pointing to a magnificent decoration of diamonds chiefly, which blazed on his person

like so many stars reflecting their rays in the sunbeams, which at that time streamed into the room. "Touching the Duchess's health?" he resumed, in a tone of inquiry.

"My Lord Duke," answered Beaumont, respectfully, "her Grace hath writ therein all she would that your Grace should know, and hath not commissioned me to say aught upon that matter."

The Duke looked gravely at the letter. The hurry of life since he came to the French capital had been such, that he had found little time to think of the absent, or to disturb himself about her who pined at home. A qualm of conscience, however, passed through his heart as he ran over quickly the short but expressive passages which, had they been of reproach, would have pained less, than speaking, as they did, of patient endurance, and devoted, unrequited love.

"God hath sent a grievous affliction upon me," thus wrote the poor Duchess, "in this absence. I trust," she added, "He may grant me life that I and mine may long enjoy you."

The Duke paused, and was about to close the letter precipitately.

"Oh, believe," such was its concluding expression, "that never hath woman been so devoted to man as I to you!"

The Duke stood for a few moments so absorbed in thought as not to hear the message brought from the Cardinal, to say that all was ready, and that the representation in his Eminence's theatre—for both at the Palais Royal and at Rueil, Richelieu had his company of comedians—awaited only his Grace's arrival.

Buckingham, therefore, hastened to complete his preparations, talking gaily as he did so, for he would not permit Raleigh or Beaumont to retire. For the moment, home seemed to be forgotten, and the present all in all.

"Knowest thou, Martin," said the incautious favourite, addressing one of his grooms of the chamber, "how my Lord of Kensington is attired to-day? I find him, Beaumont, here, marvellously well received," he whispered, "too well, perchance."

"My Lord Duke," said Martin, "his Lordship is very plain in his attire; and, in that he is young—"

"I know that," returned the Duke, impa-

tiently, "and well-favoured too," he added. "He hath not had my crosses as yet," he muttered to Beaumont, frowning.

"So," thought Raleigh, "even beneath all this greatness there is a thorn—my Lord Kensington's high favour at Court."

"His kinswoman, my Lady Ashley, doth even whisper that his favour with the Queen-mother is great," whispered the Duke again to Beaumont.

Carew caught the words "Lady Ashley," and his face was crimsoned. He cast his eyes upon his own rich and becoming attire, with sensations which none could have suspected.

The Duke at length went out of his chamber, and walking down a long gallery, followed by his retinue who had collected in the ante-chamber, he descended the great staircase into the hall of the château. It was filled by retainers and guests: through these Buckingham and his attendants walked, the gay, the great, all falling back to make room for the favourite. As he passed, Buckingham paused to exchange gay words with a lady, modishly dressed, who playfully called his attention to herself.

The lady spoke fearlessly and, as it seemed,

wittily; for the Duke, hurried as he seemed, stopped to laugh and to retort.

In a few moments Beaumont and Raleigh passed her. Her eyes were fixed upon the former.

"How like!" she said, in a whisper. "But art thou sure?"

"Certainly," answered a lady near her, "'tis Master Raleigh."

Carew turned towards the speaker. His attention would have been transient, had not a sparkling bracelet from the arm of the lady at that moment fallen at his feet.

He picked it up, and presented it with a low obeisance.

"Not on thy knee?" asked the lady, gaily.

"If thou wilt, Madam," replied Carew, kneeling.

"Thy father was the pink of gallantry," whispered the lady, as he moved on.

He looked back, but the crowd of gentlemen and of pages urged him towards the door; and soon, after threading one or two passages, Carew found himself in the box appropriated to the Duke of Buckingham, in the private theatre of



the Cardinal. Gorgeous satin draperies around in the box, embroidered with the arms of the once poor Bishop of Luçon—who had been, it was said, glad in former days to sell his old tapestry for a few gold pieces—and a semicircle filled with princes and peers, and radiant with bright eyes and diamond circlets, soon engaged the attention of Raleigh. Yet he was far less dazzled by the scene than Beaumont, who boyishly admired, or than Devereux, whose delight could not find words.

On one side of the exquisite little theatre, adorned with the skill of Vouet, sat one whose name is associated with an Englishman's earliest associations of taste and splendour: this was Henry Rich, then Lord Kensington, better known as the Earl of Holland, the renovator of Holland House. A great part of that structure owes to him, indeed, its quaint, but tasteful decorations. At that period—and indeed before—Lord Kensington was high in favour with the Queen-mother of France, and with the almost infantine Princess Henrietta Maria. Nor could one wonder. He was singularly “lovely” (thus spoke those who knew him well) “and winning.”

The illegitimacy of his birth had been effaced from public remembrance by his personal valour ; but there was something (so his foes said) in his fair face, that revealed his ill-starred father's wild and roving spirit—something crafty, like his mother.

On the other side, sat the high-minded and handsome Earl of Carlisle, whose attractions were thought to have won the fancy of the girlish Princess who was soon to become Queen of England. Sent to woo by proxy, Lord Carlisle had played his part too well ; and the imagination of the fair Henrietta Maria had been charmed by his high-bred deportment and stately beauty. Fit representative of England, this nobleman was, however, the very soul of honour ; and his conduct in this flattering, but dangerous embarrassment, formed a strong contrast with that of his countryman, the Duke of Buckingham.

The box in which the Cardinal usually sat, and that of his royal master, were still empty ; but there was one opposite to that allotted to the Englishmen on which Buckingham never ceased to rivet his gaze from the moment that he entered.

Surrounded by her ladies, standing, all except the Duchesse de Chevreuse, her intriguing favourite, and attended by all those appliances which enhance the fascinations of those who are accustomed to grace a Court, but which extinguish the simpler and homelier beauties of a humbler sphere ; in all the prime of a beauty which later judges have deemed questionable, but which her contemporaries have exalted as irresistible, sat the once innocent and once well-intentioned Anne of Austria. Her loveliness perhaps gained by distance, for it was never of so strict an order as to defy criticism.

The Duke remained many minutes in an attitude of deep reverence when he saw her. On her part, she raised to her lips, so famed for their exquisite hue and form, a hand, also so celebrated for its symmetry and whiteness, to add kindliness to condescension, as she saw the favourite bend lowly. Yet her demeanour was dignified, although, despite the rouge which, in compliance with the Spanish fashion, Anne wore on her cheeks, a blush was seen to tinge a complexion fairer than that of any of the famed beauties of her time.

It was some moments, too, before Buckingham could recover his composure after this recognition; and his eyes still—and with his usual imprudence, in the face of the whole Court—sought those of Anne. Hers, which are said to have been so varying in colour that none could say whether they were of the deepest blue or grey, were soon averted; and Buckingham, perhaps for the first time in his life, really enamoured, could gaze upon hers, aware that, though she seemed to avoid, she was perfectly conscious of his devotion—the neglected, humiliated wife of Louis XIII., for not until many years afterwards did Anne become the mother of *le grand Monarque*. Her loveliness was not so much that of feature as of expression: the sweetest smile spoke truly of a heart naturally innocent and kind; and her brow, well-formed, and capacious, indicated an intellect, afterwards appreciated by Mazarin. All in this beautiful Queen had Nature intended to be pure; but circumstances made her artificial. Already the exterior betrayed the influence of French fashions. Her fine hair was fastened back, frizzed and

powdered ; and Art perpetually lent its brilliancy to her cheeks.

Beaumont thought, and said, that he deemed his countrywomen in the modest coif, or with their unpowdered tresses, far lovelier than this celebrated beauty ; but Raleigh, to whom he addressed this remark, preferred the high refinement of the fascinating Anne. There are some minds which can scarcely appreciate simplicity.

“ It seemeth to me,” said Endymion Porter, who stood behind his lord, “ that the Queen hath well done never to permit sheets of any but the finest cambric to touch her exquisite skin—a perfect creature, as she is.”

“ Yes, it was bruited here,” replied Carew, “ when last I visited Paris, that a certain great man should say to her Majesty, ‘ Madam, your punishment in the infernal regions would be to sleep in sheets of Holland cloth.’ ”

“ A proper taste,” said Endymion.

“ An absurd luxury,” returned Carew, scornfully. Yet he was one who appreciated others somewhat after the manner of the world, which is apt to value people as they value themselves.

The Duke, at this instant, turned round, and commanded Beaumont to repair to her Majesty's box, with a message of compliment and reverence. A splendid bouquet was to be given with the compliment. It consisted of natural flowers, among which was a single camellia, a flower first cherished in the green-houses at Rueil. In the centre of the milk-white leaves was a knot of rubies; and in that of the cluster of orange flowers around it, were stamens formed of pink and white diamonds. This costly gift was fastened together by a ribbon, embroidered with seed-pearl.

Beaumont went out into the corridor, and was proceeding towards the Queen's box, when, in the midst of a retinue of gentlemen ushers, he beheld approaching a man whose actual age was enhanced by the apparent existence of a mortal disease. Supported between two gentlemen, he came. All heads were uncapped, and even some knees were bent, as he passed on—the Prince-Cardinal de Richelieu. As he walked, he stopped from time to time, apparently to recover from exhaustion, but, as it was thought, actually to observe the countenances of those

around him. The lights of the theatre fell upon his brow, over which the ecclesiastical skull-cap was simply placed; but the short yet flowing hair, and the trim moustache, were at variance with that mark of his calling. A long Capuchin cloak, decorated alone by a diamond cross, fell over a richly-worked garment of lace d'Alençon, its dark folds adding to the height of a figure the majesty of which even illness could not subdue.

He spoke; and Beaumont thought he had never heard a voice so musical. He turned towards the young stranger a transient glance of curiosity; and Beaumont felt that he had never before beheld such an impersonation of high intellectual power. There was no arrogance—no harshness; and the manner in which the Cardinal saluted those around him was almost caressing—at all events benevolent.

The appearance of the young Englishman in the corridor, the splendid bauble which he held in his hand, were not unnoticed by the Cardinal, who desired one of his secretaries to inquire the name of the guest—for so the courteous Richelieu termed him—whom he

had not seen before ; and after having satisfied himself on that point, his Eminence entered his box, thence to make a careful survey of all that passed during the performances.

Beaumont, meantime, hastened to present the jewelled bouquet to the Queen. He trembled as he was ushered into her presence, and heard the voice and the gay laugh which had thrilled so many hearts before—at the sound of which even the great Cardinal's pulse had beat, it was said, more quickly. The youth stood before her ; and the frank smile, the winning courtesy with which the Queen turned towards him, and the blush with which she received the gift, seemed to banish the remembrance of royalty, and to place before him, not the Queen, but an enamoured woman—a woman endowed with all the sentiment, and cursed, perhaps, with all the sensibility of the tenderest of her sex—a woman vain, perhaps affectionate, whose warmest impulses (and nothing so approximates us to the great of this world as the knowledge of some secret suffering which *humanizes*, as it were, their career to our view), whose best resolves were frozen—nullified by the stupid indifference of an apathetic husband—a woman



exposed to more than ordinary temptations, and to none greater than at that moment.

Dressed in a robe of pale green satin, the sleeves of which were looped up with large pearls, while festoons of the same ornament fell over the body of her dress, and dangled in her powdered hair, the Queen's beauty was almost dazzling; and her costume contrasted well with that of the Duchesse de Chevreuse, her unworthy *confidante*, who wore, after the Spanish fashion, a black dress, gorgeously decorated with diamonds and rubies. As Anne received the bouquet, the Duchesse, in a whisper, directed her attention to a box enshrouded in complete gloom, into which, in a sullen mood, as it was thought, there sat at one extremity a figure in solitary state—the King. Anne threw the bouquet into the Duchesse's lap; and bidding the youth who brought it return, with every graceful compliment, to his master, fixed her eyes upon the stage.

The scene had been drawn up when the King entered; and a sort of masque—an apotheosis of Buckingham, whose actions by field and flood were compared to those of all the heroes who had figured since the world

began—were represented in what we should now denominate *tableaux vivants*. In a later age, Madame de Genlis contrived such representations for the Princes and Princesses of the House of Orleans, whom her intellect prepared for their arduous career.

In the time of Richelieu, the arts were employed to give effect to every pleasure; and even the aid of the church militant was called in to assist and dignify the Court revels. Around the house, in their stately ecclesiastical costume, sat the prelates of France, who were invited on this occasion to do honour to the Duke of Buckingham. The Bishop of Chartres, formerly confessor to the Cardinal, arranged the seats; and then, when the representation was finished, appeared in a character somewhat novel. Clad in velvet, the devoted ecclesiastic was seen advancing at the head of a troop of twenty-four pages, who carried the collation which was offered to the company, and on his bended knee, to offer them to the King and Queen.

The curtain fell; and loud acclamations in honour of the hero of the night broke the

silence of the theatre, wherein good-breeding, and perhaps a faint attempt at saintly decorum, usually restrained all such expressions. And then all the company retired to the great gallery which ran across one wing of the château, to pass the intervening hours between midnight; some in gallantry and *persiflage*; others in observation and eaves-dropping; many at the card-table; and Buckingham in watching the bright and smiling object of his devotion.

As the audience quitted the theatre, the penetrating glance of Richelieu saw a shadow settle on the face of the King. The Cardinal who, the moment before, had panted for air, had leaned heavily on the arm of his secretary on the one side, on that of the saintly Joseph on the other—for the Capuchin had not entered the house until the close of the performance—then darted forward, and seizing a flambeau from one of the King's pages, carried it himself; thus proffering, in the presence of the whole Court, an act of humble servility to the abstracted and moody Louis—thus propitiating the royal cipher.

“This betokeneth no good to our Duke,” whispered Lord Kensington to Lord Carlisle. “His Majesty is jealous.”

“And not the only jealous man here,” returned Carlisle. “Know ye not that all the hatred borne by a certain great one unto the Queen—all the alienation between Louis and his wife—springeth from *one* source?”

“I noted,” said Kensington, “that the King’s eyes, from the corner where he sat in gloom, were ever turned on him. ’Tis well the nuptials have taken place, or we might rue another treaty broken.”

“And by *his* folly,” said Lord Carlisle.

“My Lord Duke,” cried Lord Kensington at this instant, as the Duke quitted his box, and, with a flushed face and triumphant air, stood blazing with diamonds near them—“My Lord Duke, how complete are your Grace’s triumphs this evening. Blazing like a comet—”

“Stop, Kensington,” cried Buckingham, laughing, “no French compliments between thee and me. Besides, I go to lead a minuet with the Queen: detain me not, my friend.”

He passed on. Fastened to one side of his hat, yet swaying to and fro, a dark ostrich

feather, spangled with diamonds, caught the rays of the lights as he went, and it seemed as if a shower of dew-drops had fallen upon the velvet sombrero which Buckingham wore.

The two noblemen exchanged looks.

"What will he next?" said Lord Carlisle. "How much is in pledge for yon feather? and who is to pay the loss of even one of those gems?"

The two lords were constrained, however, to follow their superior; and as they went, in lowlier guise, less courted, less observed, but more trusted, their hearts might know a tranquil conviction of security, of which that of the ill-fated, imprudent Duke could never be wholly conscious.

As these two great noblemen entered the gallery, Buckingham was treading a minuet with Anne. In those days the science of dancing was at its acme, and the Duke had formerly acquired it in France. The grace, the majesty, the perfect ease of his deportment as he bowed, stepped back, and gazed at the Queen, in the approved style of the cavaliers of the period—his gay smile, his attitudes not too well finished, not too much the paces of

the professor, but just studied enough to mark the proficient, might well accord with the dignity of his royal partner.

Anne, on the other hand, moved with equal dignity and a degree of grace which, while it resulted from her perfection in the art, looked like the effect of youth and gaiety; and, as she danced, her colour beneath the rouge came and went, and the brightness of her eyes, and their too expressive glances, disclosed to the whole Court how deeply her susceptible imagination was affected by the surpassing attractions of the English stranger, who dared to seek more than a transient favour from the Queen of France. The brilliancy of the stars and jewels of the surrounding courtiers, the superb dresses of the French and Spanish ladies who composed Anne's retinue, contrasted strangely with the ecclesiastical costume of Richelieu, and still more singularly with the Capuchin Joseph, who was seen alike in the courtly revel, or at the confessional, or in the bureau of the Cardinal, or in the aisles of the Church of Rueil, always the same—the same dark garments, the same abstracted and saintly air—the garments covering a heart

full of regret for past errors, the saintly air concealing a spirit still deeply tainted with this world's interests.

The graver notes of the minuet died away. A gavotte, played by the finest band of musicians in Europe, struck up, and the whole room was in motion. As the Duke sprang forward, to catch the Queen's extended hand, a jewel of extraordinary magnitude fell from his dress. He did not deign to notice the accident, by which some thousands of pounds might be taken from an estate already greatly encumbered. The incident seemed ominous to some; and even in that gay dance to betoken the ill that worked in the smiles of Anne, and the presumption of Buckingham.

## CHAPTER V.

## THE GROTTO.

THE freshness of the following morning tempted the restless Carew Raleigh to rush out from his appointed chamber at an early hour. He traversed in wonder the vast gardens, eventually reproduced in those of Versailles by Le Notre, at the command of Louis XIV.; and upon a larger scale can still be admired in their copy. He lingered in the immediate precincts of what then, as now, mostly interested young men of his time—the stables. Near to these ample buildings were the aviary and the poultry-yard, both appendages of no ordinary size; and in the centre of the latter a clear sheet of water,



sparkling in the summer sun, and crowded by numerous water birds—in which the great terror of nations was curious—added life and cheerfulness to the scene.

Why did Carew, as he heard the clock strike six, pass rapidly into the park to seek the famous Grotto of Pebbles at one angle of that fortified enclosure? Did such gew-gaws attract him? Why, as he walked down the stately avenue of chestnuts, the spiral tops of which were whitened with flowers, while the luscious scent of thousands of blossoms, carried by the pure air of the morning's dawn in all directions, delighted his senses—why did he stop to look about, around him, or listen, as he gazed upon the exquisite sculpture of the Fountain of the Star—one of the many perishable beauties of that fairy scene—to hear if *her* footstep approached?

Disappointed, he quickened his steps. Perhaps the object of his search had taken refuge from the heat, or the chance of intruders or observers, in the grotto itself. He darted into the park: an immense avenue of plane-trees intersected it. At the end of this might be seen a triumphal arch, which formed the main

entrance into the precincts of Richelieu from the adjacent town of Rueil—all long, long since destroyed; but resuscitated in the triumphal Arch of the Carousel, which exactly resembles that beneath which Richelieu was wont to enter his barricaded *plaisance*.

As Carew proceeded towards the arch, he perceived a by-road, which led, as he conjectured, to the grotto. He stopped short. The question: "What can come of this?" occurred to him. Curiosity, perhaps, more than the interest which the occasion inspired, prompted him to proceed. Had he then turned aside, how different might have been his future lot! How often do slight accidents appear to determine our fate; and how carefully we should consider the first approaches to intimacy in what are commonly called affairs of the heart, but which might more consistently be termed calculations of the head. How difficult it is to recede without being scathed in the encounter, when folly and self-interest are mixed up in such communications as those which took place between Carew Raleigh and the Lady Phillipa Ashley.

Married, whilst yet a child—and remaining

a child in some things all her life ; yet, in the knowledge that makes woman old, and corrupts the taste, if it does not debase the conduct—too early versed, Lady Ashley had been admired (followed, but scarcely loved) by many a suitor during the years which had elapsed since her widowhood. She had been in most foreign courts, and had taken the world as she found it. How it was that she had not wholly lost a reputation which was seared, no one knew : that she had kept an atom of character to make a second marriage upon, was owing to the absolute coldness of her nature. She had no deep feeling ; but she was generous and good-natured. She had a fund of sentiment, and a phraseology of high pretensions that, as long as one believed in them, were at once charming and ridiculous. She was now beginning to feel that the brightness of her youth was declining, and that the young and blooming were driving her from the field, in spite of those arts of obquetry which had become involuntary to her. To sum up her character—she was a woman who wished to retrieve the venial errors of her youth, and yet still to enjoy the freedom of manners which had originated those errors.

She cared little for virtue, but she adored respectability.

Such was the woman who drew on Carew Raleigh, as she had drawn on others, to worship, while he despised her: to become her slave, without giving her his heart. Had there not been a touch of sentiment—questionable enough—but an ornament in Lady Ashley, she had not held a moment's influence over him. He proceeded, however, to the grotto: the grotto, guarded by its two grotesque monsters, spouting water: it appeared to be empty—not a murmur broke the profound silence. The massive portico, formed of stones alternately rough and polished, was untenanted: no footstep seemed to have passed over the moist floor of Venetian mosaic, which beneath a lofty vaulted roof composed the principal compartment of the grotto. Within a second chamber, as it might be termed—vaulted also—deep and still, lay a clear but dark pool or reservoir of water, on which no ray of light ever fell: tranquil and smooth, it seemed like a frozen pool. Carew stood for a moment before it. The glimpse of a white dress fluttering in one corner of this dark enclosure, caught his atten-

tion just as he was quitting it in despair of finding what he had gone to discover.

"So then, you have failed in your word, Master Raleigh," said a female voice; "by my dial, fifteen minutes."

As these words re-echoed through the silence of the grotto, there stepped forth a figure far too modish in dress, far too sophisticated in attitude, to be mistaken for one of the many naiads who peopled in sculpture the gardens of Rueil.

"By my dial," repeated the lady, as she, with Raleigh, stepped gladly out into the fresh air, extending her hand, on the third finger of which a watch, set in a ring, betrayed that it was then six o'clock. "Yes, you may look and marvel," said the lady; "the bauble is precious eno', but hath its duplicate. The King—*our* King Charles—hath t'other, and doth ever wear it. Eliab Webb, the maker thereof, of whom my father bought it, ere we went to Spain—"

"You have been much at divers Courts, Madam?" said Carew, with the feeling of a man who knew enough of society—and enough only—to distrust every woman who had been

much in contact with the great, from the notion that her nice sense of delicacy, if not her actual modesty, might have suffered from the taint which takes away those charms of character with which a man of the world can least dispense—simplicity and sincerity.

“No,” was the careless reply, “not much—nor long. I was in Spain when my father was ambassador there, with my husband, Sir Anthony Ashley.”

The words grated on Carew’s ear, and he walked in silence by the side of his companion, and passed unadmirably, perhaps unconsciously, the various wonders of those marvellous gardens.

They stopped simultaneously at the Grand Parterre, where flowers, set in white sand, were formed into the figure of animals, each little border being encircled with tiny rows of box.

“There lacketh but one thing here,” observed Raleigh, as he looked moodily upon this, the boast of Rueil, long since for ever obliterated—“nature.”

“Master Raleigh, if you come hither to be solemn and dull,” said Lady Ashley, “I had

better not have shortened my slumbers. When I challenged you to a morning's walk yesternight, it was to discourse of her of whose praise I am never weary—thy mother."

"I do not forget, indeed, Madam," replied Carew, somewhat haughtily, "all your Ladyship's bounty to Lady Raleigh, nor the deep, unceasing obligations," he added, in much confusion, "that you have laid me under, on my own account. Permit me to say, the time may come when Sherborne will be mine, and I can repay, even to—"

"Oh, Sir!" cried Lady Ashley, suddenly, "speak not on that theme here. Let it be left to stewards and scriveners to talk of repayment—of what? For the life of me I cannot see what thou hast to do with repayment. See how the heavens above, the vistas around us, call us to enjoyment. I *will* not hear of marks and jacobuses while the orange-trees are blooming nigh, and the birds—the only free and happy things here, I wot—are straining their throats to please us."

"Madam—" Carew began.

"'Tis not seemly—'tis not cavalier-wise—nor courtier-wise—nor like thy father's son,

to disturb thyself and me about a paltry pittance lent, if thou wilt, or given, as *I* will, unto the son of one whom"—her voice sank to a whisper—"I would fain have given *all* to save !"

"Madam," said Carew, passionately, "command me for ever ; my gratitude, my devotion—"

Lady Ashley stopped him by a laugh.

"Devotion to *me* !—to an old woman like unto *me* !" she cried, throwing back her head, and raising her large, dark expressive eyes to his. "Go, and proffer such words to the young and comely damsels at home. You do not, I hope, Master Raleigh," she added, very seriously, "mistake me for such an one as—whom shall I say ?—the Duchesse de Chevreuse, maybe—an antiquated coquette ? Is such your notion of *me* ?"

Raleigh coloured slightly. He had not intended the word "devotion" in the sense in which it was taken. It was a mere tribute of gratitude and respect, and not the language of gallantry, which he wished to hold to Lady Ashley. For once he was at a loss how to proceed. He looked at his fair companion.



Rich masses of chestnut hair, *crépe*, in small curls, enhanced the charms of a face just commencing its wane of youthful beauty. The eyes alone—large, dark, steadfast, a little hard, a little bold, yet oftener cast down than upraised—retained the boasted attractions which had been paraded from Court to Court in the girlhood of the widow. Her dress was infinitely picturesque. Adopting the Spanish fashion, the mantilla fell gracefully over her ever-drooping figure; and disregarding the use of powder, she had already adopted the custom, which soon grew into vogue at the English Court, of permitting her hair to fall around her face in innumerable small ringlets. Her nose was neither classical nor *retroussé*—it gave no particular character to her face. The mouth was well-formed and voluptuous. A very modest touch of *rouge* added a tint to a rich and dark complexion. To the pre-occupied mind of Carew, all these fascinations seemed to have little charm. The light and artfully arranged curls were not so seemly as the dark glossy braided hair which he never forgot. The fine eyes wanted the modest softness of those which never gazed boldly

into the countenance of another. In the mouth there was not the sweet purity which especially pleases men of Carew's stamp. As he surveyed, Lady Ashley seemed suddenly to recollect herself: she drew her mantilla around her, until it almost closed over her features.

"I must not let you go any farther with me, Master Raleigh," she said. "I see hundreds of envious eyes directed towards us from that terrace. We must not brave the talk and calumny of the idle."

Carew, to whose mind no design of any possible attentions on his part that could attract calumny had occurred, was again confused—and yet, so far amused, as not to wish the interview suddenly to close. He proposed to Lady Ashley to cross the great sheet of water, on the brink of which they now stood, in one of the pleasure-boats which were provided for the idlers in that enchanted spot.

"'Twill be charming," replied Lady Ashley; "and when in the boat I can tell you wherefore I challenged you, Master Raleigh, to confront the fervid heat of the morning. 'Tis not pleasure, but business that hath tempted me abroad betimes to day."

"Business?" repeated Carew, colouring.

"Yes, business. Lay your cloak, good Master Ralegh, as your father hath of yore done for the service of our Maiden Queen; and pr'ythee, further," she added, laughing, and raising a small white hand, "look not at me with those wicked eyes, as I make my disclosure."

"Wicked?" exclaimed Carew: "by my troth, Madam, I meant not to be wicked."

"Ah! you men creatures cannot help it. 'Tis your second nature. What a delicious scene this is. How prettily that corner of the château cometh in at the end of yon green vista. Could I once but forget the *oubliettes*, crowded with prisoners, in yon fair house"—

"*Oubliettes*?" cried Ralegh, incredulously: "*oubliettes* at Rueil?"

"Yes—all the world knoweth it to be true, that *oubliettes* there are. And so it is with all here—hollow, deceitful. Will you be my champion?"

"How can I do less?" answered Carew, somewhat alarmed.

"How kind and noble of you! There's my hand. Now leave me a small portion of it—don't absolutely devour it."

Carew, who had ventured to raise the proffered hand to his lips, bowed low, and resigned it at once.

"You see me, Master Carew," Lady Ashley recommenced, as they glided through the placid water, rowed by a servant of the Cardinal, "in all these gay revels, in all this splendour, alone. I must explain to you," and Lady Ashley's voice became soft and low, "how I am here alone—a poor unprotected widow."

"You do me honour, Madam," said Carew, feeling a little awkward.

"Family differences," said Lady Ashley, looking up, and fixing upon her victim all the witchery of her eyes, "have severed me from my natural protectors—my brother and his wife. Could I recite the arts, the wicked defamation—but I will not be uncharitable—God forgive them! You have heard all, perhaps; and 'tis that I would not that your good and saintly mother—on whom my very soul doateth—should banish me from her friendship, that I now speak thus boldly. You will befriend me?"

"Assuredly," answered Carew, warming a little; for the allusion to his mother, and the

remembrance of all the generosity of the widow, touched even his stern heart.

"And now," said the mysterious widow, "good morrow. Follow me not to the château: on pain of my displeasure, essay not to do so."

"That were too hard a decree," returned Raleigh, assisting the lady out of the boat, as they now reached the opposite side of the lake.

"Well, then, if thou *wilt* be disobedient, I must pardon thee," cried Lady Ashley, assuming the familiar style and manner of that day. "Thou wilt be my champion against all assailants?"

"Certes. But why should attacks be made? Who be the assailants?"

"That I leave to thy wit, Master Raleigh, to discover. A friendless, unprotected widow—oh! it is marvellous how foul tongues are!"

"Perhaps, Madam," observed Carew, thoughtfully, "'twere best to disappoint them sometimes by flight. I grant this Court is the very hot-bed of vice. Why provoke its malice? Why not use that best part of valour—discretion?"

"As how?" asked Lady Ashley, turning her face full towards him.

"Why—unless duty or service demand it—

why remain in so impure an atmosphere, when exposed to its worst influence? Why not quit it?"

"I came here with my Lady Carlisle," replied Lady Ashley, rather abruptly. "Good day, Master Ralegh."

She turned suddenly aside, and darted into one of those luxurious alleys in which the evergreens were allowed to grow full and rich, yet restrained from intercepting the grass walks, still gleaming with the dew-drop, which lead from one avenue to another.

Carew, after a moment's hesitation, followed her rapidly.

"Forgive me, dear Madam," he gasped out, breathlessly, for her steps were very rapid, "if I have presumed to advise. Your rare beauty—"

"Me! an old woman! Oh, Master Carew, address such talk to the Duchesse de Chevreuse, not to *me*!"

"Believe me, it is with deep respect to your Ladyship, as my mother's generous friend, that I venture thus to speak."

"Will you, then, take me to your mother—to her society—her protection I mean?" said Lady Ashley, imploringly.

“Madam, you know, perhaps, that I cannot leave the Duke whilst here. Command me—”

“Well, then, I constitute you, Master Raleigh, my knight. Let me see: what title shall be yours—the Knight of the Bleeding Heart? I have it. I have not said unto you the half of what I purposed to unfold. To-night, perhaps, in the twilight, at the—”

“To-night, when the sun goes down. At the orangery. Adieu.”

Lady Ashley kissed her hand as she spoke, and swept gracefully away into an adjoining grove.

Her affectation, her beauty, her eccentricity, perplexed Carew Raleigh. He had associated but little with women; those whom he best knew were wholly devoid of artifice. His general feelings towards the other sex balanced between deep respect for the good; intense disgust towards the reprobate. He knew no medium in his sentiments towards the sex: the nicer shades of character; the lines which divide vanity from coquetry, coquetry from intrigue, were to him imperious. He thought, nevertheless, that he knew the world well.

With regard to Lady Ashley, these were the

brief particulars of his acquaintance with her. She had shown his mother, when visiting, as the widow sometimes did, one of her seats situated near Tenchley, many kind attentions. She had proffered even more: one day, stung by the knowledge that her son could not prosecute his claim to Sherborne without funds, without the means both to appear at Court and to propitiate the powerful, Lady Raleigh, in an evil moment—for evil is the moment in which debt begins, evil is the moment in which independence ceases—one fatal day, Lady Raleigh stood a suppliant in Lady Ashley's hall. The boon was granted instantly, and Carew was supplied with all that could enable him to play his part either at Whitehall, or in the château of Rueil.

Be it remembered that such obligations were not then rare, from the needy to the rich, and Raleigh satisfied his conscience by giving a bond upon his future estate.

When he reflected on the motive of such generosity and confidence, he could explain it in no other way than by the proud conviction that, as a tribute to his father's memory, Lady



Ashley had been kind to the widow, generous to the son.

How delicate then was the conduct in which she threw herself on his protection— young—no, not young—beautiful, rich, and a widow !

As Carew, engrossed by such reflections, paced about, now here, now there; now near the famous Grotte de Baleine; now amid the roses and *fleurs-de-lis* which composed the redundant *parterres* near the château; now in the park, where, amid sculptured muses and naiads, the stealthy executioner might sometimes be seen hastening to do his work in some remote corner, whither the victims of the Cardinal's vengeance, or the martyrs of his state policy, were taken, from the *oubliette*—so tradition affirms—beneath the château, to their doom.

As Carew walked, the sight of the Cardinal, returning from his morning ride, arrested his attention. A litter, surrounded by a company of gendarmes, was coming slowly up the avenue. Two carriages followed the hearse-like vehicle. In one of these—alone, his melancholy face close to

the window, and turned towards Carew, sat the Father Joseph ; in the other, four priests, who had been to administer extreme unction to one who had died that day, condemned before the secret tribunal of the Cardinal, with more than inquisitorial silence and mystery.

Carew shuddered. "And so," he thought, "between the acts of that gay comedy which ever and anon is enacted here, some deed of oppression interveneth. The Muses are here rivalled by — the hangman. Corneille one moment—death the next. The quantity of an heroic poem the subject of discourse to-day ; to-morrow, a conspiracy against the House of Austria. To-night, a ball ; to-morrow, the plan of a battle. "God save us poor Englishmen from such a despotism !"

## CHAPTER VI.

## THE ORANGERY.

OF all the statues, grouped and single, which adorned the gardens of Rueil, one alone remained a few years ago. It is a Minerva, a resemblance, according to tradition, of one of the fair, and doubtless frail, ladies who visited Rueil :

“ *Preparez votre encens ; c’est Guise ou Vénus,  
Sous les habits de la sagesse.*”

So the inscription affirmed. Venus, however, more likely than Minerva, inspired the sculptor’s art.

The figure was, at all events, exquisitely lovely : the features of the beautiful Sophie de Guise, to whom the world gave the palm of

personal charms, were more flexible, more full of life, less calm, more impassioned, than those selected for their subjects by the classic school in general. If Minerva, it was Minerva with the fascinations of a woman; if Venus, it was Venus with the intellectual dignity of Minerva.

Around the bending form came odours of orange-flowers; and not far from the goddess, whom, as the flattering verse on the pedestal declared: "Heaven had restored to earth," stood a vase, from the deep basin of which a *jet d'eau*, which rose to a considerable height, and then fell into a clear reservoir below with a delicious sound, gave that sense of cool tranquillity, which nothing but the rushing stream or the gushing fountain can produce.

It was evening: the great avenue of chestnut-trees was deserted, and all the guests of Rueil were immersed within doors, in cards, or gallantry, or politics; when Carew, passing through a broad gravel walk which led from the flower-garden to the orangery, and ascending a flight of steps, came before the great triumphal arch, erected after the model of Trajan's arch, and was almost entranced by the classic beauty

of the scene around him. Upon the raised enclosure, on which orange-trees in full bloom, in fruit and flower, and of great height, were planted, after the fashion of the day, in rows, forming thus an approach to the arch, stood Sophie de Guise, the mute genius of the place, looking, as it seemed benignantly, on a scene so fair, whilst the distant notes of music from the château were wafted by the evening breeze in dying cadences.

It was in this spot that Carew again met Lady Ashley. Long after the bright gleams of sunset had ceased to play upon the *jet d'eau*, long after the Venus-Minerva was enshrouded in gloom, did they pace together up and down the orangery; and afterwards, to and fro in a Grecian colonnade wherein the moonbeams were already stealing ere they separated.

"Yet, thinkest thou 'tis discreet thus to linger, dear Lady?" thus spoke Carew, "whilst idle and envious tongues may whisper away thy good name. For myself, I little heed their malice; but—"

"True," replied Lady Ashley, gathering around her her mantle. "I do protest I am

affrighted at the very thought of re-entering that crowded gallery, where all eyes do fix upon me their glances."

Carew could have answered that there were there younger, even fairer, objects of envy and notice than Lady Ashley; and a slight smile betrayed that passing thought, but she saw it not. One of those whose monomania is respectability, Lady Ashley never appeared to know that the blessed consummation of all the virtues which is expressed in that word, is not to be attained without care and prudence. She complained of the attacks of society, yet gave by her levity constant supplies of new themes for the censorious. Already, the language between her and Raleigh was that—not of love, for love is respectful, but—of gallantry and sentiment; and yet their actual and personal acquaintance dated from the previous night.

"Thou wicked one!" exclaimed Lady Ashley, fixing her dark eyes on his; "thou dost despise—I see it well—the calumnious tongues of the many; and so would I, had I the protection of a father, or brother."

"Yet methinks, Madam," said Carew, looking at her dubiously, yet admiringly, "that I

did see a lady with your Ladyship at your Kentish seat: she is not here?"

"Oh no! That is a sad history. I was betrayed by her."

"Betrayed! As how?" asked Carew, sternly.

"Thinkest thou, thou art to know all my secrets, presumptuous one?" cried Lady Ashley, flirting her fan almost up into Carew's face.

"Let me carry this bauble; thou hast no use for it now, and rest upon my arm," returned Carew, encouraged, in spite of himself, to a style nearly approaching that of an accepted suitor.

"Indeed, in very deed, I am weary," returned Lady Ashley, in a faint voice. She seemed to cling to Carew, and her clouds of vapoury-looking hair almost touched his face, as they walked slowly along.

Carew's imagination, rather than his heart, was touched by the attractions of a vain, handsome woman, whose last resource it, perhaps, might be to patch up a broken reputation by a marriage with a man of ancient lineage. He alone was ignorant, at that moment, that the name which he bore gave him no small lustre

in the intellectual, though dissolute circles of the château of Rueil. He was rapidly rising into fashion, though he perceived it not.

Imprudent as her actions were, there was something feminine and depending in Lady Ashley's manners. She was naturally clever, but half educated, vain and sentimental; her apparent folly covered a selfish and corrupted nature. She might have been termed a respectable coquette. Her conversation always turned upon decorum; her watchword was, the world's opinion. The phantom that visited her at night, and pursued her by day, was the envy of persons who, perhaps, merely despised, and then forgot her. Such was she who attained a mastery over—not the heart—but the fancy of one whose whole thoughts had once been given to Elizabeth Throckmorton.

As they walked towards the château, Lady Ashley suddenly withdrew her arm, which had rested on that of Raleigh, and bade him "good night."

Carew detained her; his voice was a little tremulous as he said:

"Where shall we—*shall* we *ever* meet again?"



"Maybe not," replied Lady Ashley, looking down; "for I go unto my forest home, as soon as my Lady Carlisle doth release me, in the wilds of Surrey."

"And not into Kent?"

"Not yet awhile. By the will of my late husband, I am enforced to live six months at West Horseley, or to forfeit that pretty incumbrance—a great house, one corner whereof sufficeth me."

"You are so moderate in your desires. But your husband—the late Sir Anthony—willed that his treasure should be half her days in retirement?"

"Ah, Sir! question me not on those points: 'tis a sad history."

"Could any one be insensible to so much beauty?"

"Now don't be naughty," cried Lady Ashley, playfully escaping from him, and running towards the house.

Carew remained in a deep reverie: the beauty, the coquetry, the winning and accessible nature, were marvellously backed up by the "great house." His cheek became flushed with a sense of hope and happiness; a sort, never-

theless, of moral intoxication, not likely to be lasting. As he rested against a vase, the marked and graceful shadow of which was reflected in the broad light of the moon, he felt some one pull his cloak from behind. It was Lady Ashley, who had run back playfully to torment him.

“You are wonderfully shrewd, Master Raleigh, as to the secrets of others. Hast *thou* then no secrets? Doth no fair damsel hold thee in her chains?”

“Madam,” answered Carew (his voice sounded sad, even she thought) “you know I have been—these two years ago—a traveller beyond seas. Guess if I have had time, or occasion to—to—and besides, a poor man I have ever been—and still am.”

“Oh, call not thyself poor that beareth the name of Raleigh!” said Lady Ashley, fixing her eyes upon him—tears even came into them, and she wept gracefully: a slight handkerchief of cambric, richly embroidered, was applied delicately to either eye.

Carew was overcome. He took her hand: “Could I but declare my adoration,” he said, passionately.

"Ah! too late to-night, wicked one," cried Lady Ashley, snatching her hand away, and again escaping towards the house.

Carew did not follow her. He stood transfixed, and felt as a man may do who has just escaped an earthquake.

"It is well," he said to himself, "that this mission draweth unto its close. In a few days, the young bride will set forth, methinks, to her destination. And then, once back again, the real business of my life—the real efforts to compass my hopes, are to begin." He walked calmly towards the house, for the enchantment of the moment was at an end.

To avoid returning by the same entrance as Lady Ashley, Carew turned aside, and passed a sheet of water, in the centre of which stood the far-famed pavilion in which Richelieu, attended only by Father Joseph, concocted schemes of arbitrary power, or framed plans of self-defence. From the windows of the classic edifice streamed lights, which played upon the waters beneath, lighted in ripples with the moonbeams. On the brink of the miniature lake, guards, armed to the teeth, were parading; near the Cardinal's boat a small

detachment stood ready to challenge any wanderer of the night.

"A dear price to pay for greatness," thought Raleigh; "yet, I would fain pay it—who would not? to command the destinies of other men—I, who can scarce work out mine own."

As he walked on, answering to the word which was given each day to the inmates of the château, he met Endymion Porter, who came to seek him.

"The Duke expecteth thy attendance, Master Raleigh," said the formal and assiduous groom of the chamber. "Thou! who hast thy fortune to make, to dally in the moon-shine!"

"Stop one instant, good Master Endymion. See! the Cardinal cometh forth out of the pavilion; the boat is rowed off to meet his Eminence. How dark, how portentous the aspect of those two figures, Endymion."

"I shiver—I protest I do, Master Raleigh. Ay! dark, indeed—and boding no good unto us! Knowest thou not what hath happened?"

"No! nought amiss, I hope."

Endymion shook his head. "The Cardinal," he whispered, "hath writ unto my master yesternight; and hath superscribed his letter 'To the Duc de Buckingham,' simply; whereas, added the poet, drawing himself up, "*our* title is 'Monseigneur le Duc de Buckingham.'"

"I hope," answered Carew, contemptuously, "our Duke hath properly resented such insolence."

"Most pertinently, Master Raleigh; and hath despatched an answer with this superscription thereon: 'Monsieur le Cardinal.'"

"A low-born ecclesiastic! To dare to insult an English ambassador!"

"No, Master Raleigh, no!" returned Endymion, in a disconsolate tone; "we are quits there. Armand de Richelieu cometh of an honourable house; and his coat-armour—I am bound to say it—equalleth that of our patron."

"*Our* patron!" cried Carew. "Who hath constituted the Duke *my* patron, Master Endymion?"

"Why, Master Raleigh, and if thou wouldst be proud, thou must first be independent," said Endymion, goading the nature which he could

not comprehend. "Since ever we had the honour to serve one master—"

"Master Endymion, hold thy peace, or I toss thee into that lake," exclaimed Carew, in haughty displeasure, walking indignantly onwards.

He hastened to arrange his dress, which had been discomposed in his evening walk; and then, his cheeks burning with offended pride—a pride that scrupled not, nevertheless, to accept obligation—he entered the gilded saloons wherein all that was gay and enticing, all that was intellectual and important in Paris, was at that moment collected.

The Cardinal had preceded Carew, and was parading the room. In the midst of all the luxury around him—that luxury which excited, long after its possessor had rested in the tomb, the jealousy of Louis XIV.—the pre-eminence of interest appeared. What mattered it that the works of Vouet, the then popular painter of the day, hung in the gilded panels of the walls? that a figure representing France, and surrounded by all the arts and all the sciences, and carrying in her hand a portrait of Louis XIII. intimated that all the glories of that

brilliant epoch were due to the weak monarch whose insignificance was a proverb in his time? Who could look at Richelieu, and not perceive that to *his* mind was due the rapid transition from monarchy and civil war, to all that civilization has to bestow, which is graceful and permanent.

Richelieu, as he addressed himself with a courtesy that perfectly concealed his real sentiments to all, presented, nevertheless, a subject of pity. Some have thought that it was the perfection of art, to affect a weakness of body calculated to disarm hatred, by inspiring compassion. Colossal in intellect, but feeble in frame, he seemed one moment as if ready to crush the kingly power which he upheld; the next, to sink away in the very bosom of greatness, and to be exhausted in his efforts to level the nobles around him by the force of a moral sway. More to be pitied, perhaps, than his victims, his pale face, beneath the scarlet cap; his secret agitation hidden beneath the semblance of a proud tranquillity; his real weakness, and his imperious deportment, reminded the beholders of the workings of a tempest, which is spent and exhausted in flashes of light-

ning and peals of thunder. As he moved round the intimidated circle, now pointing out to one of his stranger guests the exquisite tapestry on which the loves of Antony and Cleopatra were depicted; now calling attention to the border of exquisite flowers by which the main subject was surrounded; then praising a lady's dress, or passing comments on her collar of pearls, there was still a gloom in the gallery: a frost seemed to have come over the scene, sparkling before, and every joyous feeling appeared to be ice-bound. Who was to be the next victim? To whom did he speak most? Whom did he most flatter in that caressing tone which neither man nor woman could withstand, even though the snare that lurked in that smile, and the danger that pleasant words betokened, were understood? On him the most favoured, was the bolt next to fall.

The Cardinal pressed with sandalled foot the rich carpets which were spread over the *parquet*. His scheme was to astonish and captivate by inordinate luxury in his household, and to impress upon the world a conviction of his own personal austerity; bare-footed, he wore, as all could detect, a hair-shirt beneath his robes.



Carew, who stood for some moments contemplating the majestic figure which passed grandly around and disappeared in an inner chamber, was summoned by Buckingham to take a new part in the gorgeous and hollow scene. The son of Raleigh—he who had wandered long obscure—he who had stood a suppliant in the Duke's hall—was now the idol of the evening. The popular impression that his father had died to please the Spanish faction, enhanced his merits at the French Court, whilst his own personal accomplishments were duly esteemed in that refined and intellectual assembly.

He received proudly, but courteously, tributes from the great and beautiful. At that moment, his thoughts reverted to those whose pride and tenderness were centered all in *him*. What would *they* say? They were still his world. His heart—for it was then affectionate—was all that evening, often and often, in the poor room at Tenchley, where his mother sat, counting the lonely hours that were to pass before his return; and if another image came with hers, it was repelled—yet still it came again before his memory.

“That Capuchin, Master Raleigh,” said

Endymion, as they both stood near the Duke's chair, whilst their patron, even in the face of the whole Court, revelled in the smiles of the Queen; "that Capuchin is the real minister of France. He guideth in secret him of whom he is the shadow. Four brothers of the same order—Capuchins themselves—work under his direction."

"And what," asked Carew, "may be his history—in brief, the beginning of his high destiny?"

"Read you not in the deep lines of his face," answered Endymion, "that he has suffered? Suffered, but conquered—conquered himself."

"I comprehend," said Carew, turning away. "Somewhat of his history have I heard."

Endymion looked after his young rival—for so he esteemed him in the Duke's favour—as, tired of standing behind the Duke, Carew turned to admire some of the pictures, and said within himself: "That young man hath ambition; but never, never will he rise. He hath no popular qualities. Methinks, the close spirit that never unburdeneth itself, and doth never fix friends, doth never even form them, nor disarm foes of their malice."

"Thou art moody to-night, Endymion," cried a gay voice at this moment, "what ails thee?"

"Nothing, dear Beaumont; only I was thinking that I affect one who, like my master, doth carry his love and his hatred in his forehead, rather than one who, like—"

"Like whom?" asked Beaumont.

"Like Father Joseph, maybe," returned Endymion, bowing low, as the Capuchin, a smile parting his chiselled mouth and lighting up the meditative eyes which bespoke, or were supposed to bespeak, a soul abstracted from all around him, passed at that instant. His exit was the signal that the revelries of the evening were shortly to close; for after the main leader of his phalanx of spies retired, Richelieu rarely permitted the festivities to be prolonged.

## CHAPTER VII.

## THE DISCLOSURE.

It is all a dream now, that once birds sang, and blackberries and wild roses grew, where Abingdon Street and the Milbank Penitentiary now stand; and yet there were those living not long since, who could recal the time when a visit to Pimlico was a country walk; and when Cut-throat Lane, in that vicinity, was a dangerous place, fully bearing out its name by many a dark history.

Robberies in Piccadilly, in Queen Anne's time, were not unfrequent; there was, in short, but one safe highway, and that was—the water. Many damsels of degree, who could never walk abroad, were at liberty to order their boat—as

a lady now orders her brougham—and to navigate under a most becoming awning, tranquilly, unto any stairs that might be nearest to her destination. How calm and pleasant must have been the transit! how soothing the gentle exertion! how preservative of the complexion the soft breezes untainted by smoke! And what opportunities for tender adieux, whispered even in those days of punctilio, by the gallants who hurried to hand the fair voyager out of her boat, did that agreeable but long discarded custom engender.

Not so was Elizabeth Throckmorton entertained: no obsequious suitor received her, nor bade her farewell, as she alighted one morning from the Duke's barge, and ran up Whitehall Stairs. She was followed by Mistress Olive Porter, whose place in the ducal household seemed one of trust rather than occupation. An humble relation of the Duchess of Buckingham, she was a dame of a severe countenance, with a kind and tender heart, a kill-joy in manners, but kind in action; one in whom hope seemed never to have been born, or to have been extinguished during a long course of patient vexation. A sort of stepping-stone be-

tween the great and the little, and married late in life to Endymion Porter, Olive knew no interest in existence, except for those with whom she lived in a dependence then not deemed dishonourable. Yet she was sensible of their errors, and silently brooded much over the dangers that threatened those for whom she would have died willingly, though scarcely giving them a civil word. Her dark red complexion, her stern eye, her mouth of determined expression, the set form of her garments, and the tone of rebuke in which she spoke, formed a contrast to the delicacy and grace of her companion, whose gentle voice added to the injunction to the head boatman to stay at the foot of the stairs, another—to give the poor churls who had rowed a piece or two, to drink without to “their master’s health.”

“Have they not had ale eno’ for their breakfast?” said Olive, looking daggers, but adding a groat to one man, who seemed heated and tired, out of her own purse. “Wastrels, all—over-paid, over-fed—eating the Duke’s substance !”

“I think,” said Elizabeth, not heeding her, “I see Roger on the terrace. Sure ’tis his gait,

that I remember so well when he was wont to wait for us on the Tower Hill Green : we were lodged in the Brick Tower then."

"I should conceit thou canst scarce remember those days, Mistress Elizabeth," said Olive.

"Have I had so much of joy since, as to efface them?" replied Elizabeth. I do, indeed, recal them as days of much content." She paused ; then sighing, said : "'Tis not as though I had been alone ; but my cousin and I had many things to disport us withal ; sometimes we went on the outer wall to see the city watch muster—that was a pretty sight. Ofttimes we saw our own guard, the guard that were about our prison, at the drill : my cousin affected much such soldierly sights."

"And then the executions : they were blithesome, I warrant," said Olive, grimly, and with a sarcastic smile, worse and more biting than a frown.

Elizabeth turned upon her a piteous look.

"We did even crave leave of the Lieutenant to change our quarters those days ; though I can recollect the sound of St. Peter's bell—that bell which used to scare us from our play, before it sounded for our heaviest sorrow."

"Pleasant themes—these," said Olive, as they walked along. "Thou wert too young to see such days as these—'twas a shame."

"And then," resumed Elizabeth, with a smile that had something seraphic in its expression, "whatever, or whomsoever we had on earth to dread, the heavens were ours. I can recal well how my uncle did take us on the battlements (when the Lieutenant was gracious, and did permit), and spake to us of those glories which be above man's ken or comprehension. And so lively is that remembrance still, Mistress Olive, that, when I look up at those glorious constellations, it seemeth to me that he is with us *still*: that there he dwelleth—my poor murdered uncle—in joy and glory, waiting for us poor pilgrims to rejoin him *there*."

"Hush!" said Olive, "we are nigh unto the Whitehall now. 'Tis neither safe nor seemly to halt here, if doomed men—"

"Olive," exclaimed Elizabeth, seating herself upon a mound of turf, "go unto Roger whilst I stay here. Prythae, good Olive; I will abide thy return here."

She was left alone: often and often had Elizabeth visited the gardens of Whitehall to



seek the old servant who, among all Sir Walter Raleigh's friends and dependants, was the only person that had never lost sight of his son. Olive soon returned with Roger, and leaving him with Elizabeth, the worthy matron re-entered the palace, there to commune with certain persons of her acquaintance.

"What news, Roger? what news of the absent one?" inquired Elizabeth. "My aunt, thy former mistress, hath writ to me," she added, blushing, "to see thee, and to ask if thy young master hath need of aught that we can send unto him? Lacks he gold, or new suits? Oh, they say that the French Court is full of luxury and fine clothes. I would not—his mother would not—that he should be so far eclipsed by his compeers, as she feareth he may be. But, is he well?"

"Ay, very well, Mistress Elizabeth," answered Roger.

"Thy words are good, but thy face ominous," cried Elizabeth, turning very pale. "Thou answerest not, Roger: *is* my cousin well? Thou hast had tidings from him by my Lord Duke's servants—so I heard—and *what*?"

The old man looked fixedly at the earnest

speaker. He knew well—as somehow servants always know such matters—the history of the throbbing heart that prompted these questions. He knew and pitied. With a delicacy of feeling not unfrequently to be met with in the lower classes of England, though rarely elsewhere, he hesitated; then some sudden resolve made him respond:

“He is well, and likely to be well; for a rumour hath noised about that he is like to marry.”

“And whom?” asked Elizabeth, with a quivering lip.

“One, Mistress, that may prop up the old name with her wealth,” replied Roger; “may win us back Sherborne with her gold, and make my Lady’s heart glad again.”

“Yet dost thou not tell me her name. I would know it,” said Elizabeth.

She held in her hand a flower. Roger fixed his eyes on that flower: it shook as if swayed by the wind, yet not a breath of air played on the bushes around, or the light sprays of grass on the lawn.

“Thou knowest one who hath been kind unto my mistress, the sometime wife, now widow,

of Sir Anthony Ashley—the Lady Phillipa, as they call her?”

It was well for Elizabeth that she had thrown herself on the green mound, for she might otherwise have sunk to the ground.

“Well,” she said, almost in a whisper, “let me hear all about it.”

“Rumour hath so bruited it, Mistress Elizabeth,” resumed the old man; “but I conceit, perchance, untruly.”

Roger was silent, and so was Elizabeth. After a few moments, she said:

“Rumour is seldom wrong, when she travelleth by an especial and privy messenger. Albeit,” she added, in a broken voice, though her features retained their composure, “let my kinsman be sure, Roger, that he need not lack help, should he want it. I fear he is, indeed, indifferently provided. And now bid Olive come unto me. Do not forget to tell him that which I now enforce,” she repeated, earnestly, but in a tone of sadness, and a look almost of despair.

Roger left her. She sat there, and seemed stupified by what she had heard. That which she had often in secret anticipated, had then

come. The close of hope, the beginning of misery, was come. Hitherto she had struggled with an early prepossession as if it had been a sin; but she never, until that moment, knew the power which that prepossession had over her. She never before had realized to her heart a rival, nor contemplated a final tie between her cousin and another. A hopeless affection, which we believe to be requited, can be borne without torture until that pang come—which does so often come—the certainty of being forgotten and supplanted.

“It hath been the religion of my life,” said Elizabeth to herself; “he and his have been my all. What have I now to care for?”

Roger found her sitting as he left her. Her face was turned from him; her eyes were fixed upon the silent tide of that river whose course is traditioned by such volumes of human suffering.

Olive came slowly along the terrace, speaking to an old friend of her own degree, as she walked. Their talk was low and mysterious; and a shake of Olive’s head showed that all was not right.

The good woman and her charge descended

the stairs, and got into the boat. It was then Olive's part to tell Elizabeth in a whisper the news of the day: the indignation of the vulgar against the Duke, for the outrageous extravagance of the mission to France; the revived rumours of his having poisoned—for what earthly good to himself none could tell—the late King; the obloquy which attached to the present King's marrying a Papist—all, all charged to the advice of Buckingham. Olive was surprised that this information, delivered with her best forebodings, and intermingled with her first style of denunciations, made little impression on her auditor.

"Thou takest not to heart the evil days that are to come to thy patron, Mistress Elizabeth," she said at last, gravely.

Elizabeth started from her reverie.

"Indeed, indeed, what thou sayest doth afflict me much. But are all these things *true*?" returned Elizabeth, looking round for a moment.

"Art thou ill?" asked Mistress Olive, struck by the pale face that an hour ago had been blooming with health, though always delicate in its freshness.

"No"—the little word fell upon the ear even of the hard Olive plaintively. "No," she repeated, in a yet sadder tone; "I wish I were."

"Mistress Elizabeth!" exclaimed Olive, scandalized at the exclamation, "knowest thou what thou art saying? To wish to be sick were even a sin; but in thee, who hast our lady to comfort, and thy poor aunt to attend on—fie!"

"Ah! she indeed would miss me," thought Elizabeth, and the tears came into her eyes.

She fell into a train of thought in which self-reproach, the assistant misery of the unfortunate, was the main emotion. She knew, she had long known—that it must come to this; that her cousin must marry for wealth. She had herself alone to blame for her unworthy and lingering feelings to one from whom destiny had severed her. She was selfish for wishing it to be otherwise. The relations who were to her as parents, had so decreed it long ago. Not a being knew her secret weakness—that at least, comforted her.

The humiliation which sorrow brings along with it, to a mind rightly disposed, is no doubt

wisely prescribed by that wisdom which wills that the "broken and contrite heart" shall be brought nearer and nearer to our Redeemer's pattern of love and charity in its desolation.

Elizabeth, it would seem, needed no such chastening. Her life had been a series of youthful privations, relieved, indeed by those snatches of happiness which childhood and youth make for themselves. To those who had home-ties in prosperous circumstances, hope of forming other interests, the affections of two relatives, all that was left to the orphan niece of Raleigh, were comparatively a slight loss. To her, the annihilation of their love, was—it so seemed then—a total wreck of *all*.

She entered the court of York House. It was full—too full ever—of all the appliances of greatness for her to feel that it was *home*. Crowds of servants; spacious halls; gilded apartments; what are they to the miserable but as so many aggravations of that sorrow which seeks a quiet chamber—some nook where it may nurse itself unseen? Her heart sickened as she remembered that she must dress, and

attend upon her mistress at the noon-day's repast, and that the smile of happiness must beam on her face, else—but she could not assume it. She rushed past Olive, and entering her own room, was there able, at last, to be unfettered.

Meantime, Mistress Olive, inquisitive but prudent, left the poor stricken one to her own thoughts, and proceeded to the Duchess. She found that a change had come over York House since she and Elizabeth had left it that morning, in tranquillity. A despatch from France had arrived. The bride, married already by proxy, had set off from Paris. The Duchess of Buckingham, in company with other ladies of the English Court, was commanded to repair to the coast, and thence to France, to meet the new Queen. The nuptials were to take place at Canterbury.

“But where,” asked the Duchess, looking around her, as she gave this news to Olive, “where is Elizabeth?” Olive proffered to call her. With a relentless countenance, but a softened heart, she went to Elizabeth's room: the door was not shut, and she entered unbidden. Elizabeth was turned from her: she



was sitting before the portrait of Lady Raleigh, her eyes fixed on the picture.

Mistress Olive now summoned her away.

"'Twere best to make thy attire somewhat more seemly, ere thou goest to the Duchess, methinks, Mistress Elizabeth. I marvel how forgetful thou art, sometimes, dear child."

Elizabeth looked at her. The set features and hard manner were the same ; but the voice was kind. It found its way to the heart of one alone in the world. Elizabeth put her hands over her face, and wept.

"Come, come, no folly !" cried Olive, firmly : "but," she added, in a gentler tone, "may be I guess what now, and oft, hath made thee unhappy. No more of this, I pray thee."

She led Elizabeth along, thinking by action to banish what she termed folly ; yet her kind heart was bleeding all the time for one who seldom surrendered herself to the expression of unhappiness.

They found the Duchess already giving orders for the needful preparations for departure. Of late the neglected wife of Buckingham had been so indisposed as to give her relations cause for alarm ; but now the pale cheek was

flushed, and the Duchess's voice was clear, and her directions issued with the decision of an energetic mind.

She was speaking to her master of the household when Elizabeth and Olive entered.

"All things must needs be prepared, Master Stephen, to the end that when my Lord cometh, he may have forthwith such banquets and revelries as may seem fit to his Grace."

She stopped short—something in the man's face checked her.

"And the receiver of his Grace's rents will provide the wherewithal?" he asked, respectfully.

"Of course; yet, should he lack money—" a short sigh broke her words—"I have here a collar of sapphires and rubies," and the Duchess took from a cabinet a casket. "Some honest jeweller, if such an one can be found, will lend upon this. Tell him so, Stephen. And now, let nought be spared to give him—to give the Duke—contentment in the meeting with those of his household that are appointed to meet him; and despatch, good Stephen, that to-morrow we set forth. Eliza-

beth, the Duke is mad with expectation of our coming."

"I am glad," returned Elizabeth, faintly; but a choking sensation checked the close of the sentence.

"That I know thou art," said the Duchess. Amiable, affectionate, absorbed in her *own*, the Duchess, like most of the great ones of the earth, was unaccustomed to note the changes in those who served her. Absolute poverty she comprehended and pitied. Slight shades of sorrow were imperceptible to one, habituated herself to be watched only, and alone cared for by those around her.

Elizabeth, like most of those who are used to a courtier's life—and such, in a moderate degree, might be esteemed hers—well knew that nothing is so impertinent as sorrow, nothing so inconvenient, so unwelcome—especially at seasons of excitement—as one's personal affairs.

Elizabeth, therefore (too well trained, poor child of adversity!) curbed every indication of her private feelings, as kneeling down by her mistress's knee, and taking her hand and kissing it with deep respect, she entreated to be

permitted to give up her post of attendance to another, and to be excused from accompanying her Grace to France.

“What, Elizabeth! Not go to France? Not accompany me where thou hast been pining to go these many days past?” cried the Duchess, raising the head which was bent before her, with her hand. Thou answerest not. Ah! then, Elizabeth, I know thy reason. Thou art about to wed, and would remain behind to make thy bravery ready.”

“Ah no!”

“Then perchance Lady Raleigh is sick, and thy dutiful heart would give up even this occasion of pleasure to attend her.”

“No, Madam, she is well.”

The Duchess reflected for a minute.

“Then,” she rejoined, “I guess the cause of thy refusal: my Elizabeth hath not apparel so costly as her heart pineth for to meet our new Queen. That shall be provided for thee.”

“Your Grace is all goodness; but be assured that last new year’s gifts did amply replenish my poor means—thanks to your Grace’s bounty.”

The Duchess mused for a little while.

“ And wouldst thou,” she resumed, reproachfully, “ having no just or worthy cause to keep thee here, leave thy poor mistress to new ”—she was going to utter the word “ attendants,” but she changed it to friends—“ to new friends, or perchance, indeed, foes? thou, who knowest well how we are beset! Who shall comfort me when I am bad or sick? Who shall guard the secrets of my Lord Duke, when thou art not nigh? Elizabeth, I thought not that thou wouldst have left me in this moment of haste and confusion!”

“ Madam, if thou valuest my service—”

“ And, Elizabeth,” when thou knowest how my husband is beslandered; that even now—even now”—and the Duchess became greatly agitated”—“ talk there is of an impeachment; and all our fortunes hang on the King’s favour. Thou knowest how rarely sleep visiteth my pillow; thou knowest (Olive is not nigh) how in these palaces, as the vulgar call them, we are poor—poor, for our lands are mortgaged; thou knowest still more, Elizabeth, the jealous anguish of this poor heart, and how oft it hath been vexed, how oft it hath forgiven: for thou must

know it, though never yet have I unfolded so much unto thee. And yet thou wouldst leave me!"

"Madam, dear Madam, you have only to command; never, never will I quit your Grace."

"Never? Elizabeth, 'tis an incautious word—never until another claim thee as his own. And some I know who would fain do it at once; for instance, a kinsman of our own."

The Duchess looked at Elizabeth, and remarked at last the pale face and quivering lip. A sudden light seemed to break upon her mind.

"Is it, dear Elizabeth, my consoling friend—thou, who knowest every secret of thy poor mistress—is it perchance some withering grief or disappointment of thy affections that hath thus changed thy purpose? Tell me all."

"Madam," replied Elizabeth, "I *cannot*. Pardon me the seeming disrespect—the—the—"

"No, 'tis no disrespect," interposed the Duchess, quickly, "to keep thine own counsel, even unto me. 'Tis I who lack discretion in

such inquiries. Albeit, time presseth. And thou wilt not fail me?"

"Never, Madam; indeed I will not."

"And, Elizabeth, 'tis not for myself alone," added the Duchess, excusing what she almost herself feared might be termed selfishness—" 'tis not for myself alone I need thy assistance. My brother Purbeck goeth with us. He is sick at heart; thou knowest why—thou knowest how infelicitous his nuptials; and thy presence ever sootheth his maladies, be they of the body or of the spirit. And now, go," added the Duchess: "seek Olive; send her to me; for I must give her charge of my poor little ones the while we are away. Call together my maidens, and bid them use their hands as they ought, so that all be in readiness for to-morrow's journey."

Elizabeth obeyed. The Duchess was left alone. She had many difficulties to prove at that moment the strength of her nature. Like most women who are cursed with extravagant husbands, necessity had taught her the value of a well-regulated expenditure when too late. An heiress, without fortune—for all her dower

had been long since swept away—she combated, as one who had been to the manner born, with debts and creditors, and without a murmur saw the fatal game of ambition and profusion played out until the closing act.



## CHAPTER VIII.

## AMIENS.

THE long summer's day was drawing to a close when the sounds of the organ of the cathedral denoted to the good people of the city of Amiens that *salut* had commenced. Already had the aisles been peopled with many poor market women, who were telling their beads before they hastened back to their distant homes ; but the choir was soon after the commencement of the service filled with a very different race.

The young Queen of France had arrived. She had been on her knees engaged in private devotion in one of the chapels formed in the wall of that transcendent edifice : long and

earnest had been her prayers ; but when the swelling notes of the *salut* were heard resounding through the vast aisles, and the voices of the choristers awakened in the coldest hearts the spark of enthusiasm, Anne came forth, and attended by her ladies, walked, with her hands folded and her head lowered, into the chancel.

As she passed the Chapel of St. John, the Queen paused for an instant as she recognized the figure of the young Henrietta Maria, who had secluded herself in that chapel, and with bended head knelt before the sacred relics of the Baptist, treasured in the cathedral of Amiens. Perhaps Anne could not view without compassion the royal child—for so seemed Henrietta at that period—worshipping in security, possibly for the last time, after the manner of her forefathers. Perhaps she, who knew how hard a fate awaits the young Princess whose destiny is entrusted to one whom she knows not, looked at her with a sympathy to which she durst not give words. The ringlets, light and exquisitely rich, of the young Princess's hair, were shaken by the agitation to which she abandoned herself as she prayed ; and the beautiful hazel eyes, which

Vandyck has depicted, were full of tears, when, on hearing the first psalm of the evening service, Henrietta arose, and, followed by her ladies, entered the chancel. It was already filled by courtiers and nobles: the English ambassadors were not there; for not even curiosity ought to have induced them to enter the holy edifice in time of prayer. The figure of the Queen-mother—Marie de Medici, the unworthy wife of Henry the Great—might be seen; but her face was almost veiled; and she shrank from that observation which was ever, in her case, accompanied by demonstrations of hatred from the vulgar. Henrietta took her place next to her mother; and soon the notes of her voice—for the compass and management of which she was even then celebrated—were heard mingling sweetly with the tones of the choristers. As she sang, tears fell down the cheeks of the young Princess; and it was only when she knelt to pray, and clasped together the small white hands, upon one finger of which was the ring of betrothment, and upraised her eyes, that the surpassing delicacy of her features and complexion was to be seen.

The full, arousing service of the Romish

Church, the swell of the powerful organ, the tones of a hundred choristers, resounded through the lancet-pointed arches of that celebrated choir. But did they touch all hearts? Was there not *one*—no longer the youthful, the calm, the pure heart, such as Henrietta Maria *then* might have boasted—that resisted the holy influence of all around it, on which the marvellous influence which architecture adds to the arts of music and painting, fell powerless—on which those inimitable carvings, representing subjects the most sacred, failed, even for an instant, to fix attention? The grandeur, the poetry of all around her, awakened then, indeed, not one emotion in the pre-occupied heart of Anne of Austria. She saw not, heard not. Her heart was in the garden—in the cool alley where, an hour hence, she was to meet, for the last time alone, the object of a mad and fatal passion.

Years afterwards a being—the victim of tyranny and political jealousy—is said to have exemplified, in a life of misery, that retribution which God visits “upon the children of the disobedient.” A fearful mystery hangs over

that sad and solemn story ; similar, indeed, in many of its bearings to the more modern tragedy—a tragedy too true—of Caspar Hauser : one of those secrets of history still unexplained, and awaiting that final sentence when all things hidden shall be known.

As Anne leaned upon the carved *fleur-de-lis* which decorated the royal seat, and envied the absorbing devotion of her young sister-in-law, a figure moving round the Triforium Gallery, and partially enshrouded in gloom, caught her attention. She gazed, and a melancholy smile passed over her face : it was Buckingham. Aware that she was watched, she tried to turn her eyes from those which were fixed on her, but it was too late. Richelieu, indeed, was not there, but his spies were everywhere ; and years of humiliation were the penalty that Anne paid for the indulgence of her perilous predilection.

As the service closed, and the procession of priests passing by the royal ladies with deep reverence disappeared, *that* figure disappeared also. An hour afterwards it was seen walking in the green alleys of the great hotel (now swept away by revolutionary violence) in which

Anne for the time, with all her Court, remained.

How graceful and dignified was the step of ~~the ill-starred~~ favourite as he ~~paced~~ along ; his dress all too costly for the occasion. Clad in a purple satin, set over with orient pearl, he wore over it a cloak in the Spanish fashion ; his hat, upon which a plume of white feathers was fastened back, was also of the Spanish form. He walked alone, and his cheek glowed with a brighter hue than usual, and his heart beat quick with expectation.

The coolness of evening had begun when the Duke saw *her*—who might be termed his destiny—approach him, attended by a *confidante* who knew her weakness, and followed by an equerry well tutored to his part.

In the silence of the hour, in the seclusion of the grass-grown alley, Buckingham is believed to have proffered his suit, and, it is believed, not in vain. But over this interview, the first perhaps of guilt—if the limits where innocence changes into guilt can ever be determined in such circumstances—over this first outpouring of presumptuous hopes, and, perhaps, of re-

sponsive confessions, a veil has been thrown by every historian.

\* \* \* \*

What an exquisite night ! How delicately fell the beams of the crescent moon upon the tracery of those deep recessed portals, through which Anne had passed from the cathedral two hours since ! How the colossal figures of the monarchs of France, above the portals, stand forth to view ! Above, how nobly the stately towers rise in the deep jasper firmament, where countless stars—worlds full, perhaps, of joys and miseries as our own—rebuke in their infinity our insignificance !

Along the paved road, approaching the city, came a procession of carriages, guarded by gendarmes who had been sent from Amiens to meet the travellers. They had not been expected so soon ; but the anxiety of the Duchess of Buckingham—who was the most important personage of that party—to reach Amiens that night, had hurried on the English noblemen who were deputed by King Charles to meet Henrietta Maria in that city.

The carriage passed the citadel on the banks

of the Somme, and crossed the ramparts. Already they waited for the portcullis to be drawn up, the word to be exchanged, and then—then they should follow one of the many branches of the rivers which intersect the town, and soon they should alight at the Hôtel de Ville, in which rooms had been prepared for the reception of strangers.

The Duchess of Buckingham became agitated as the coach in which she travelled threaded the narrow streets, in which then no busy artisans worked—as in later days—at the loom. She tried in vain to subdue the fears which arise in most minds after long absence from those whom we love—the fears lest we may meet in sorrow, not in joy.

“I had thought,” she said to Elizabeth, “my Lord had come unto the last post to meet us. God grant he is not indisposed!”

“Perchance,” answered Elizabeth, “his Grace knew not of our coming.”

The Duchess made no reply. A courier had been despatched hours before to warn the Duke of her approach. She could not understand his indifference: her spirits sank; and when the



carriage stopped at the Hôtel de Ville, she sank back almost fainting.

Lord Purbeck was the first to perceive her condition. Gently, and almost affectionately, he supported his sister-in-law into the vast hall—almost carried her up the huge and countless stairs; and ceased not to console what he assumed to think was illness, but what he perhaps too plainly comprehended, until the Duke appeared; and the door closed, and the husband and wife were left to explanations—or reproaches.

“Mistress Elizabeth,” said Lord Purbeck, as he walked by her side down a corridor into which the sleeping apartments opened, “thou hast need of refreshment. For myself, I am weary, and have no appetite for the viands of these French people; but thou, methinks, art pale and trembling as my sister.”

He led her into a saloon, where lights, a well-spread buffet, and the sight of an assembled company were calculated to inspire cheerfulness, and make fatigue forgotten.

Elizabeth started back as she entered, but recovered herself instantly. The intervening

period between her knowledge of Carew's projected marriage and her arrival at Amiens had been employed in that self-discipline which aids, if it cannot accomplish, a return to tranquillity. Her first impulse was to offer to her cousin a cool and repulsive reception; but the generosity as well as the dignity of her character taught her a different line of conduct. Whilst every nerve trembled, and she felt as if she should sink to the ground, she gave him her hand with a composure that seemed—when afterwards she reflected on that evening—almost like callousness.

Carew was only restrained by the presence of others, to whom his situation obliged him to pay reverence, from welcoming Elizabeth with the affection of former days. At that instant, how pale—but how beautiful she was! How did her aspect breathe purity, and rebuke all that was not womanly or seemly in others. How fitted she was to adorn even that Court where fashion reigned supreme. As she moved calmly amid the crowd of guests and members of the Duke's household who were assembled to receive the Duchess, many, upon whom mere

artificial charms made little impression, felt that they had seen for the first time that which comprehends so much in its common phrase :  
“ True English beauty !”

“ Thou bringest good tidings ? My mother—when sawest thou her last ? How fared she ?” said Carew, retaining Elizabeth, who would have passed on.

“ It is long since I have seen her—I could not leave her Grace. I fear, Lord Purbeck expecteth me to take my seat, and—”

“ Lord Purbeck ! are his wishes dearer to thee than those of thine own kinsfolk, Elizabeth ? Am I—whom thou hast not seen so long, to see *his* will preferred to my—my *affection* ?”

He spoke low, and in some agitation. The gentle, but just spirit of his cousin was aroused by his words and manner. “ Am I ever,” she thought, “ and ever to be the slave of his caprice ? Forgotten one instant—my best feelings played with the next ?”

She could not speak ; but she turned coldly away, leaving Raleigh indignant and vexed. He drew up in offended pride, nor would he

give her one relenting look that evening. No !  
it is not men who are to relent and confess  
themselves wrong: 'tis to women alone to be  
candid, imploring, forgiven—and forgiving.

## CHAPTER IX.

## FAMILY AFFAIRS.

MEANTIME, the Duke of Buckingham, in alarm and contrition, hung over the feeble form of his wife, and playfully reproached her that she was changed, faded, sick—almost unto the death.

“How canst thou be so simple, Kate, as to vex thy silly heart for that I was in France, thou at home? Hast thou been troubled of creditors? or dost thou fret thyself in that the world speaketh unseemly of thy absent lord? Or fearest thou the cost of all these revels? Oh, dear Kate, thou shalt not suffer. To be plain with thee, ere I set foot in France, I did make my last will, bequeathing, Kate, all my

mansions during thy natural life to *thee*, and giving thee power—such hath been my conceit of thy wisdom—over all my personal estate. And—”

“And why,” interrupted the Duchess, looking steadfastly at him, “rehearse this to me now?”

“Only to show to thee, Kate, my love; and really,” the Duke coloured slightly as he spoke, “to prove to thee, that come what haply may come, by friend or foe, thy weal is insured.”

“My, weal! How canst thou tell of weal to me, if thou be gone? I marvel to see that oftentimes in thy gayest moods thou hast this foretaste of coming ills.”

The Duchess looked up anxiously as she spoke; but in an instant, the cloud which had saddened her husband’s brow was chased away.

“I have bethought myself of something that may please thee, Kate,” he resumed, as if by heaping kindnesses of small value when put into competition with lost affection and fidelity, he could atone for conscious injuries. “Thou must needs remember a certain jewel, oft spoke of at the Court of our late King, and renowned through Europe.”

"And what of that?" inquired the Duchess, her mind misgiving her at the thought of some new extravagance.

"A flower of gold, Kate, with three great balass rubies; in the midst thereof, a great pointed diamond, three great fixed pearls, and pendant thereunto, that rare and esteemed pearl, so called, the Brethren; this—and others, as thou knowest, were pledged by our late master to the Netherlands, and never redeemed—hath been publicly sold, and—"

"And thou hast bought it? Had we not baubles eno'?" cried the Duchess, almost mournfully; "bought it, to be pawned again—bought it, to be paid with our heart's blood!"

"And this, then, is my requital for thinking of thee," replied the Duke gravely, not resentfully—for to resentment he felt that he had forfeited his right. "I could not suffer, Kate, that thou shouldst appear less in bravery than the ladies of this Court; or that even the Queen of France," he added, boldly braving the exposure of his feelings, "should be seemlier than my Kate."

"Alas!" returned the Duchess, complainingly, "she is like to be much fairer. She hath that

which I have not—contentment, and a free heart. To her, the bloom of youth and the smile of blithesomeness; with me, both have long passed away. My childhood was dreary—it hath tinged the current of my years.”

The Duke arose. This was a topic on which he never now dilated with the Duchess. He knew that amid the brilliant exterior lurked the cankering care. He knew that the only true bond of married happiness, confidence, was wanting to give to his poor wife’s heart the peace which a less affectionate nature might have known; and he was about to rush from the sight of her unhappiness, when better thoughts returned.

“In good earnest, Kate,” he said, looking at her, “thou art not well; and what saith old Mayerne to thy sickness?”

“That he cannot minister unto it: that I am melancholy, and therefore sick,” replied the Duchess, somewhat quickly.

She mastered an emotion which had nearly betrayed—what she was too wise a woman to wish to betray—that she saw all: that she penetrated through the thin disguise of lavish kindness, into the real indifference and pre-



occupation of his heart. In a moment afterwards she extended her hand: "Good night," she said kindly, but gravely; "go to thine accustomed chamber for this night, and bid them send Elizabeth to me—good night."

The Duke kissed her hand, and crept submissively away. How cowardly does conscious infirmity render the bravest man in the presence of a virtuous, and especially of a gentle, wife. Women forget the best interests of their sex, when they irritate the erring by reproaches. The Duke turned round once. That fair young face, supported by a delicate and even emaciated hand, conveyed in its attitude of sadness its own reproach. But he was mad—hurrying on to his destiny, which appeared in the events of time so singularly interwoven with his share in the politics of France. He retired to his own chamber, there to watch the livelong night the angle of that building in which slept the Queen of France. Long burned the lights in her window, and long gazed the Duke upon that lattice, until suddenly the lamp was extinguished, and the shades of night enveloped the royal dwelling.

Then Buckingham—having long since dis-

carded his attendants—threw himself on his bed. He slept some time, but was awakened, ere the morning dawned, by a well-known voice—that of Lord Purbeck.

“Thou sleepest, George,” said his brother. “Thou *canst* sleep; I cannot. Thou hast every cause of peace, contentment, rest—I, of unrest.”

“As how, dear Jack?” asked the Duke, striving to arouse himself, and then falling back upon his pillow—“as how?”

“Heardst thou not,” replied Lord Purbeck, in a low, hoarse tone, “that ignominy hath fallen upon our house; that a child, not of our race, hath been born at Hatton House; and that fiend, my wife’s mother, insisteth that it should bear our name?”

“And wherefore not, Jack? Dear brother, thy brain is all confused,” replied the Duke, looking at the wild and mournful countenance, which the rays of a night-lamp, carried by Lord Purbeck, lighted up. There was a hopeless, crazed, almost fierce expression on the countenance of the once handsome Purbeck, that had distressed all who observed it long previously to that evening.

“And if it be so,” the Duke resumed, after a moment’s thought, “thou holdest her dower, the better part of as wilful a damsel as ever crossed a threshold.”

“Her dower! yes,” replied Lord Purbeck. “It is good for a ruined man, but it doth not content me, brother.” He laid his hand upon his heart. “We lived together,” he said, in much agitation, “two pleasant months. That she affected another—not me—I saw; I could not win her love. But let those say it who know her not—that she is cross-grained, or impetuous; I found it not so. That brief space, even of unsuccessful courtship—for so let us call it—of my wife, was the happiest period of my life. It is over.”

“My dear Purbeck—my poor brother,” cried the Duke, touched by the despondency of the unhappy man, “what ails thee in thy wife?”

“Dishonour!” returned Purbeck, almost weeping with anguish. “Thy wife is faithful to thee, George. The children that shall bear thy name, and bequeath it to their posterity, are thine own. Thy wife’s heart was given to *thee* with the nuptial ring, mine recoiled from me, and was and is another’s. Oh,

believe me, I pity, whilst I must needs condemn her ! Her young affections were her own, and should have been respected. I, indeed, have had the form of Frances Coke ; but the better and holier part hath ever been another's."

"Thou shouldst have kept her under lock and key, or ever she had dishonoured our family," said the Duke. •

"'Tis done, now. I was but one day abroad, and that to meet the King at the Moor Park, and when—when I came home again, she was gone"—Lord Purbeck stopped short in deep emotion—"she whom I had so much loved. I must needs own, that she was ever melancholy and coy, yet was she the light of my home. She had fled, and left me a desperate and most wretched man." He flung himself on his knees and hid his face on the bed.

"This is matter for the Star Chamber," exclaimed the Duke, vehemently.

"And could that give her back to me again ? Would that calm the throbbings of my brain ? No, let it be, leave her in peace—if peace she may have. I have come here to forget, and, if I may, forgive. As yet the world knoweth

not our disgrace. Breathe it not. I promise thee to see her no more. But leave her, George, to the punishment of her own heart: that will be enough, for I took her against her will. I caught and caged the joyous bird, that, left to work out its own destiny, might have moped and pined, but nought worse would have ensued. No, she told me that she loved me not. I tempted Fortune—let me bear the brunt. I came unto thee, George, to-night, for I could not rest. My heart being now disburthened, I shall leave thee.”

“Thou wilt sleep—”

“Sleep!” replied Lord Purbeck, “there is no sleep for me.” He passed away as he spoke; the melancholy tone of his voice rang through the silent corridor, and slowly and mournfully he retraced his footsteps to his lonely chamber. The tenant of that adjoining it happened to hear all the remaining portion of the night the heavy sighs, the slow, but incessant footsteps of the unhappy Purbeck; that sleepless listener had a kindred woe, a spirit of sympathy.

It was Elizabeth Throckmorton, whose sleepless hours were thus mournfully diversified by

the unhappiness of one even more hopelessly miserable than herself.

Until that night, Elizabeth had merely surmised the cause of that apparently amicable separation which had taken place between Lord Purbeck and his wife. Trustful, because she was herself upright and innocent, Elizabeth regarded the suspicions which Lord Purbeck had once or twice betrayed, as the effect of a distempered fancy: she longed, from her knowledge of what she so esteemed the purity and goodness of Lady Purbeck's heart, to reassure and console him; she longed to reunite those who might, perhaps, at some future day be, at all events, resigned to their lot, if not happy in their union. The sighs, the restless movements of the unfortunate nobleman, aroused her from reflections that had centered solely in herself; she planned, as she lay watching the glimmering rays of dawn stealing into the gilded chamber where she was lodged, many schemes, various explanations, which she was assured might console and cheer, and the projected exertion was salutary to her wounded spirit.

The Duke, meantime, aroused and per-

turbed, reflected with *honest* indignation on the infidelity of woman : the affront, the dishonour to his family were unpardonable. His own offences were forgotten. His impetuous temper was excited. Among the many amiable qualities of this ill-starred man, a tenacious love of his own kindred survived, when holier affections even had ceased to hold their sway. For a time, the concern and displeasure which he felt surmounted the exultation of that proud era of his existence, when the fairest Queen of Christendom had condescended to listen to his addresses.

The full blaze of morning illumined, at length, the rich tracery of the cathedral : the expected, and fervid summer heat caused, almost at sunrise, the inhabitants of Amiens to throng the streets and market-places, and to seek the early breeze on the ramparts. Crowds of peasants crossed the bridges, and laying down their market baskets at the doors of the churches, knelt before their patron saint, or addressed their orisons to the Virgin Mother, in their quaint provincial language. Sincere then, sincere still, in the almost traditional religion of their country, it were difficult to see

unmoved the poor, the old, the young, the idle, the industrious—all alike resort to their church before beginning the business of the day, and prostrate themselves before the holy emblems of their faith.

Carew Raleigh entered the cathedral at matins. Loitering for a moment or two to gaze upon one of those famous porches, and to admire the sculptured legend of Saint Firmin, the patron saint of Picardy, he passed in deep abstraction into the nave. It was one unhappy effect of the early misfortunes of Carew Raleigh, to have given to his religious impressions a kind of gloomy scepticism, the result of a speculative and partially educated mind. His father had been, indeed, in the height of his career, taxed with unbelief, because the liberality of his great spirit was in advance of his age, and because the narrow-minded and pedantic theologians whom James I. delighted to honour could not conceive that philosophy could be dissevered from atheism. A nobler view of the great dispensation which an Almighty Ruler ordained, a deeper reverence, a more sublime and chastened faith than that of Sir Walter Raleigh, has seldom, however, been



manifested by man. His adoration of the works of God, his trust, his eternal hopes, cheered the prison, and (except in one evil hour of despondency) went with him to the scaffold.

His son, unfortunately, had gleaned a portion only of the light of his father's intellect on such themes; and that light was darkened by witnessing injustice, unmerited calamity, and struggling innocence. The retribution for Raleigh's death, for all the abandoned conduct of the first Stuart that ruled in England, had not yet justified the ways of God to man. The misery of Raleigh, the agonies of Arabella Stuart, were unavenged. The vengeance which awaited its time, and which fell even upon the second and the third generation, was not arrived.

Carew, long habituated to adapt himself to various modes of faith, viewed none with reverence. The sight of simple people at their devotions has, however, touched harder hearts than his. He walked loftily through the aisles, and his eye hastily ran over the assembled though scattered worshippers, for whom the matin song was chanted not in vain. He

glanced over a long line of Picardy caps—but *she* was not there. Why did she avoid him? What had he done to forfeit the esteem of his kinswoman? He had stated to her on the previous evening, that if she would meet him early in the cathedral, he would enjoy with her the marvellous beauties of the edifice; but she had not accepted the proposal. Still, she might repent of her refusal; she *might*—and Carew thought she *would*—meet him there: he knew the empire which he held over her heart. “It is well,” he reflected, “that my Lady Carlisle hath carried Lady Ashley with her to England. Elizabeth would not affect, would not comprehend the ‘absurdities’”—he was disposed so to term them,—“of Lady Ashley. And then, then—’tis as well they do not meet here.”

He wandered out into the streets. How gay and peopled they were! not with the gaiety of fashion, but with that of the lowly. Every one must remember the first impressions produced by a market-place abroad. The huge baskets of fruit; the heaps of the freshest and greenest vegetables thrown upon the pavement; the flowers in huge bunches; the dark-eyed peasants in their clean high caps, long ear-rings,

and scarlet handkerchiefs, who stand resistingly, even to the hundreth *centime*, against the stoutest purchaser who seeks to *mar-chander*; the caps, the shoes, the spades, the cordage, the toys, the cooking utensils, the pats and pounds of butter, the live geese, and noisy, doomed turkeys, the baskets of eggs, the *everything* of a foreign market; how they confuse one's English ignorance of detail, and how they ravish the fancy even of the rich (and they are as susceptible as the poor of such delights) with their cheapness. And then the laughter, the scolding, the eagerness, the quarrelling even unto death about a *sou*, all intermingled with the plashing of the grim-featured fountain in the midst of the Place, and the sounds of church bells ringing in for the first mass—how confusing and exciting to the calmest spirit. Earth, at that bright season, was pouring forth her richest gifts into the market of Amiens: flowers, fruit; and, above all, giving a holy dignity to the simple scene, still dim in the morning mist—the mist of fervid heat—rose the two grand, unfinished towers of the cathedral.

Carew lingered amid the din and the bustle

of the market. Suddenly his eye caught a fresh object amid the turmoil. Before a rich confusion of roses and mignonette, and *fleurs-de-lis*, and violets, stood his cousin, attended by a female servant. The large fan which she held up between her face and the sun, the quiet mantle, and the lace handkerchief tied over her head, were enough to distinguish her from the homely peasant women, who never looked so homely as when contrasted with the fair English girl.

Carew rushed to her side.

“So early, too, Elizabeth!” he said colouring with delight. “I thought—I expected that I should see thee indeed, nevertheless.”

“Her Grace bade me come to choose these flowers,” interrupted Elizabeth, bending down; “otherwise,” she added, coldly, “I had not come abroad betimes.”

“Thou wert weary yesternight?” said Carew, taking her unwilling hand in his.

“Yes. I must needs return now—good morning.” Elizabeth walked hastily into one of the narrow streets which shoot off from the market-place. Carew, after a few moments’ hesitation, followed her.

“Elizabeth, how fleetly thou walkest. One word with thee. Hath my mother received tidings of me? for I writ to her ere thou left.”

“She had,” replied Elizabeth, turning to him a face so pale and woe-struck, that no one would have recognized the same countenance that had blushed at the humble flattery of the poor peasant women, given, as they are, to compliment one moment, and to abuse the next.

“I writ to my mother,” resumed Carew, “to tell her not to credit idle rumours, such as she hath certified to me, as having reached her. Was she satisfied?”

Elizabeth hesitated for a moment, and then answered :

“She was, I think. But still,” she added after some reflection, “those rumours prevail.”

“They are beneath my consideration,” said Carew, loftily.

Elizabeth looked down. The shadow of high houses darkened the street, and cast a gloom, unenlivened by a single ray of sunshine, over her face: it was impossible for Carew to read her countenance.

He changed the subject adroitly.

“And how,” he said gaily, “likest thou France, Elizabeth? Doth this pleasant city suit thy fancy? Art thou entranced with the boasted climate, or dost thou bewail the green valleys of England? All around the city is, I grant thee, flat and wearisome. “But I forget,” he resumed, struck and offended by the coldness of his cousin: “Mistress Elizabeth doth affect the dance, of the which there will be eno’ to night to content her, and to sadden me.”

The tone of his speech touched the relenting heart of his cousin: she looked up towards him; but the expressive glance, full of a kindly spirit, was unperceived—Carew had turned away. They had now arrived at the grand entrance of the Hôtel de Ville, which had been fitted up for strangers; and he went quickly into a small door which opened, as Elizabeth concluded, into the corridor wherein his sleeping chamber was situated.

She stood abstractedly on the pavement of the grand hall, into which a curiously contrasted crowd were mingling. Servants in gorgeous

liveries; men-at-arms; notaries and pleaders going into a *bureau* on the one side; fine gentlemen, spruce as May-day junketers, peeping out of a door on the other. Whilst she meditated for a moment on the inconsistency of Carew's conduct, Lord Purbeck appeared out of a side door. His face was wan, and his eye wandering; but, with his usual courtesy, he approached, and giving her his hand, conducted her up the vast staircase to the apartment of the Duchess.

As they walked along corridor after corridor, leaving behind them the din of the crowd below, Elizabeth could not help remarking the havoc that the previous night's misery had already made upon her companion. A sudden impulse caused her to speak out.

"Your unrest, my Lord, last night," she said, in some confusion, "hath much troubled me. Can I not, this evening, mingle for you some soporific drink?—or—or is it that your Lordship's spirits are vexed, and that the soul, not the body alone, languisheth?"

Lord Purbeck shook his head.

"Another time, kind Mistress Elizabeth, I

may ask thy counsels, who well knoweth all I must endure."

"My Lord," said Elizabeth, earnestly, "take heart. I know thy sorrow; believe—believe it hath no root in reason. I and my Lady Purbeck have been almost like sisters unto each other. Oh, credit it! her heart is pure as that of her thou callest wife should be—mistrust, my Lord, foul slanderers."

Lord Purbeck looked at her with a confused air, but he made no reply. Proud, reserved—too proud to brook sympathy, too reserved to court confidence—he knew but one heart to which he could open his own: passionately attached to his eldest brother, to him alone could Lord Purbeck lay bare the sorrows which haunted and perplexed him.

"Thy attempted solace doth not offend," he at last said to Elizabeth; "but resume it not. There are certain griefs, Elizabeth," he added, in a tone which was broken by emotion, "which cannot be soothed. No, no; talk to me not of patience—there is no remedy in that for my malady. And now, never speak to me more on this theme."



He turned upon her a fierce and fixed look. Elizabeth trembled beneath it, and gladly found herself in the calm precincts of the Duchess's chamber.

## CHAPTER X.

## THE RETURN.

FORTUNATELY for those who had temptations from which they desired to escape, or vexations which they sought to dispel, the importance of the young bride's arrival in England, where her betrothed husband was anxiously awaiting her, soon relieved the citizens of Amiens from an expensive hospitality. In a few days, the cathedral and its chancel were the resort no longer of the high-born and their retinue. The anthem was swelled no longer by the notes of Henrietta Maria's well-tutored voice; she, "who might have been prima donna in all Europe," had she not been a Queen, (and doubtless, far happier would have been her lot, had fate so ordered it,)

was far away on her road to Calais ; sitting, in fatiguing state, in a huge and gilded coach, by the side of her mother ; and drawn by six highly adorned horses, trotting along the dull *pavé*.

The ambassador extraordinary, Buckingham, whose high destiny it had been to secure and bring home the fair bride, was seated on the opposite side of the ponderous vehicle. He was in a deep reverie : sometimes he started up and looked out of the coach windows, to rail at the eternal rows of apple-trees, or to curse, in phrases which his young mistress half guessed, the toilsome, and head-cracking *pavé*. An arch smile sometimes played upon the young Princess's face as she observed his discontent, and she looked often at her mother.

At length the long procession, accompanied by its royal guard, drew near to Calais. The low, swampy lands ; the rows of stunted trees ; the wretched villages, and their miserable inhabitants traversing the marshes in stilts and pattens, all betokened that the city was not far distant. An arid, sandy soil now succeeded the bogs and quagmires ; and the sound of the sea made its indescribable impression on the ears of the travellers. They were almost arrived at

the *basse-ville* of Calais, when suddenly, Buckingham, rising from his seat, called to one of the outriders "to stop the horses!"

In some confusion, yet in such a manner that the Queen-mother and her daughter could, nevertheless, perceive that his movement was not unpremeditated, the Duke craved permission to speak for an instant to his brother, Lord Purbeck, who was travelling in a carriage behind. He quitted the royal coach, but returned no more. Lord Purbeck supplied his place, alleging as a reason that urgent business, which he had left incomplete, demanded his Grace's instant return to Amiens.

A few smiles were displayed, a few looks exchanged, and the *cortège* went on; and, fortunately for the Duke's credit at England, was detained by stormy weather in Calais. It was a dreary interval. The Duchess of Buckingham, sick at heart, kept her chamber. No inns of sufficient size then existed to receive the high personages who were to be lodged at Calais. The Hôtel de Guise was, therefore, arranged to receive them. Day after day, when the occupation of the mass was over, the young Princess repaired to the shore, to gaze upon the

cliffs of that country to which she was ever in heart and faith an alien, and which she was to quit as an exile. Elizabeth, too, more free in her humble station than the beautiful and ill-fated Princess, passed many hours of the day on that bare and melancholy coast, watching, she knew not why, for some sail from England. Perhaps one never feels so much in exile as on those shores of France. The short but stormy passage intervening between us and our home; the faint outline of the white cliffs of our native country; the departure of those vessels, in which our own tongue is the one familiar sound, all recal what more distant regions, perhaps, tend to efface—the consciousness that we are in a foreign land.

Calais teemed then, as it does now, with the exiled, the imprudent, the guilty. They walked about in those days—and they do so still—like so many ghosts haunting the dismal sands, and gazing on the faint outline of those shores which they should, perhaps, revisit no more. Even in the gaiety of some of these poor-fated beings there was a mockery: faded gold-lace clothes, all too fine for adversity, all too shabby for prosperity, they figured in the market-place,

or flourished, buffeted by the gales, on the rude wooden pier of Calais, before art and wealth had made it what it has since become.

The important personages, who were then collected at Calais, waited and waited; the winds paid no respect to their discontent; still Buckingham did not return. The Duchess grew paler and paler; and, at length, a fever of the spirits kept her almost entirely in bed.

It was well for Elizabeth Throckmorton, perhaps, that she could then seldom leave her mistress; otherwise, in that quiet old town, wherein all were spell-bound by destiny, how could she have avoided a renewal of a too intimate intercourse with her cousin? She saw him, indeed, but seldom: sometimes they exchanged a salutation as they passed the gate, the recent work of Richelieu, which separates the town from the sea-beach. Elizabeth was then often touched by the mournful look and pale face of Carew. Sometimes they met in the evening, when the Queen-mother received the scanty and discontented Court in the old gallery of the Hôtel de Guise, which was the antique structure appointed for the reception of the royal travellers and their suites. A night

such as even those who had for days impatiently listened to the hoarse gales had not yet witnessed, had succeeded a portentous evening. Late in the afternoon, every creature had been driven from the shore by the merciless blasts which scattered the sand like spray. The poor wives of the fishermen had gone to pray in a chapel hard by the beach, for those whose boats could be dimly discerned, rocked by the billows. Not a single white sail had scudded before the wind. Not a ray of light had there been along the dark horizon. Towards evening heavy rains had begun to fall, and the gales were subdued. Still, who knew how it fared with those farther out in the channel? What might be their fate? Had the poor souls, whose gains were purchased with life, buffeted with the storm, or perished in its rage?

A large fire on the hearth had been kindled, even in that summer season, at the request of the Princess of France, in the *salon* of the Hôtel de Guise. It was a spacious, but rude and bare chamber, little changed since the Balafgré, one of the bravest of that line who bore the title of the Ducs de Guise, had trod its floor; perhaps, decorated somewhat for the

occasion, when Henry VIII. had rested there, on his way to the Field of the Cloth of Gold, its air had in it much that might remind the Englishman of the old halls of his own country.

The blast shook incessantly the panes of glass in the windows ; but the flames of the fire cast a pleasant glow upon the escutcheons, the stags' horns, and the wood carving about the chimney-piece ; and those who could forget the sea, and its perils by night, were for the hour merry enough.

The young Princess danced to the sounds of a cornet, from which was suspended a bag, not unlike the Scottish instrument. It was accompanied by the notes of a small portable organ with miniature keys, held by the musician in his arms. Such was the rude music, summoned impromptu, with which the gay-hearted girl sought to dispel the weariness of the hour. As she sank and rose in a grave measure, the transparent complexion of the Princess glowed with childish delight ; her large hazel eyes sparkled when the Earl of Holland advanced in the dance, to claim her hand ; the white pendant pearl, ever her favourite ornament, was for once



less fair than her brow ; her cheek was tinged by a blush, delicate as the first opening petals of a rose de Meaux. A fair creature ! Yet carrying in her heart the canker of an incipient preference to the man sent to woo her for his Sovereign ; but winning her fancy—unwittingly perhaps—for himself.

Carew danced too. He was leading the highest lady of the Princess's retinue to join in the amusement of the evening, when Elizabeth, in great haste, entered the room. She waited, nevertheless, until the first steps of the measure had been danced out ; watched, perhaps with envy, the light-hearted Henrietta Maria gambol on the eve of her destiny : at last, in an interval of the deafening notes of the pipe, she spoke :

“ Carew,” the word was irresolutely said, “ I must have a word with thee.”

“ Elizabeth, dear Elizabeth,” returned Carew, turning and seizing her hand—“ But what ails thee ?”

“ Nought—oh ! nought. But methinks in yon window we can speak together. I have a message for thee from the Duke.”

“ He is arrived, then ?”

“ No—he is detained ; but—How the wind

rageth! It shaketh even these strong casements! 'Tis impossible for any one to go abroad to-night."

"No, in good sooth, unless he were a fool, or mad, or weary of life."

"And yet," replied Elizabeth, shivering as she stood in the embrasure of the window apart from the warmth and light, "a message from the Duke, who willeth that a special and trusty hand deliver to the King certain letters, explaining the cause which hath kept the Princess of France here; for she hath some days been expected by the King, and with sore impatience."

"It is like," said Carew, "that one madly in love, as they affirm the King to be, should lose patience. Happy he who hath nought but the winds and waves to come betwixt him and his felicity."

• He looked intently at his cousin.

"And yet," she returned, gently, and perhaps somewhat in a tone of mournful indifference, as if she knew that not even the fondest devotion of the heart she prized could now avail, "the gales are most tempestuous to-night; and

surely it were better to wait until morning, than to brave such a night."

Carew was silent for a moment: his eyes were fixed upon hers; but he could read nothing there—no, not even the slightest expression of the anxiety which was gnawing into her heart.

"On whom do his Grace's commands rest? What saith the Duke? Are they instant? If so, they must be instantly obeyed."

"Oh!" replied Elizabeth, "his Grace's commands are ever instant. But he would not that life were lost: he—he is merciful—he is human."

"Will her Grace give me *her* commands, and admit me to an interview?" asked Carew. "At her bidding, I am ready to go. See, the wind hath abated, the scudding clouds are riding the sky, and even the points of yonder gables are to be discerned. There is *no* peril, Elizabeth, to-night; and if there were, thou canst not imagine that I should not, for a mission so special, brave the storm?"

He looked into her face. His voice—alas! how it sounded like the voice of other times!

That they had ever been separated seemed like a dream; that they were still the mutually depending inhabitants of a prison, cheered by their early love—the children of the Tower—seemed all too real. Elizabeth sighed deeply. Truth, harsh truth, re-appeared in her sternest aspect. It was not alone old Roger's tale—though *that* she had believed, and she did still believe—but the common talk of all who had been at Rueil, that her cousin was the accepted lover of Lady Ashley.

She felt, as she remembered this, that all that could recal their early affection must now be an insult. She was able, therefore, to answer with calmness that the mission was one of consequence; insomuch, that the Duke's enemies were prompt to accuse him of needless delay in this matter of importance. Why did she shrink from saying "in this affair of the nuptials?" Why could she not speak the word?

"And royal lovers are not wont to bear delays as their subjects must perforce do," said Carew; "they are happier than we."

"They are happier," returned Elizabeth, as she walked across the room towards the door,

followed by Raleigh, "in that their destiny is *early* fixed for them, and they have seldom hope or disappointment."

"Thou dost not remember," whispered Carew, as they stood in the quiet of the ante-chamber, and Elizabeth took up in her hand a light she had left there, "that our King's first love was in Spain."

"I have no faith in first love," returned Elizabeth bitterly, vexed, nevertheless, at her want of self-control, "where policy, or caprice, doth intervene to move it."

She stood for an instant, as they passed on before a small casement. The sky was now again enshrouded in the deepest gloom. She pointed to it.

"Thou *canst* not go to-night."

"And wherefore should I not?" Carew spoke, as he walked on. "If the barque be lost, then the Duke is excused, and my part played out: If I perish, there goeth with me much unrest—chagrin unspeakable! My father's line endeth; and Sherborne may be the Lord Digby's, or any lord's."

"And thy mother?" said Elizabeth, reproachfully.

"Thou wilt comfort her old age, wilt thou not? Certes, Elizabeth, all this is folly: danger of life there is not—cannot be. I jest when I do say all this."

The door of a distant chamber was now opened, and Carew and his cousin were admitted into the presence of the Duchess. She was sitting alone, deep in thought, before the embers of a fire, evidently prepared to go to rest. The traces of sorrow were on her countenance: Carew was shocked at the change in her appearance since he had last seen her. He bent on his knee, and kissed, with more than ordinary reverence, the delicate hand which was extended to him.

"Mistress Throckmorton," said the Duchess, in a languid voice, "hath told thee, Master Raleigh, how that my Lord is most untimely—most unluckily hindered of coming to us here. For this delay he seeketh to excuse himself unto the King. 'Tis a foul and most tempestuous night: I would not venture another's life even to save my husband from the King's displeasure, and that his enemies should triumph—for triumph they *will*."

"Madam," replied Carew, "there is a

barque, as your Grace well knoweth, ready to sail at the Duke's pleasure: I, his servant, am deeply honoured by his trust."

"They say the tide serves," resumed the Duchess—and she looked earnestly at the casements—they were nearly driven in by the force of the wind. "Shipwrecks," she resumed, "have been of late unfrequent: since my Lord hath been High Admiral, he hath better appointed the transports. Thou smilest, Master Raleigh: thou hadst thought, perchance, that I had even meant to say that the seas had been complaisant to my Lord Admiral, Heaven bless him! To be brief—art thou afraid?"

"Madam," replied Raleigh, loftily, "my father, in his voyages, braved storms and perils innumerable: why should his son fear such mischance in so paltry an adventure as this?"

"True; then despatch. In an hour—so my chamberlain hath brought me tidings—the barque will be ready to sail. Go, and take this letter; and if aught be said unto thee," added the Duchess, turning from Raleigh, but maintaining a composure wonderful to her who knew her mistress's real feelings, "aught un-

seemly of my Lord Duke, about—touching his returning unto Amiens, assure the slanderers that he will satisfy all men's minds. And yet," she added, hastily, "'twere better to *excuse* him not—my Lord hath no need of apologists. And now, farewell! God grant I be not wrong in thus urging thee to depart in such a tempest!—God grant thou arrive in safety!"

She gave him her hand in some emotion, and then turned again from him. Carew left her, and Elizabeth remained in her Grace's chamber.

The wind now rose to a sort of hurricane; distant thunder was heard, but the Duchess, pre-occupied with the one idea of her existence—the interests of her husband — saw not, heard not. One watchful ear there was that never ceased to listen that fearful night. Unable to sleep, Elizabeth sat up in the Duchess's room; she threw over her a cloak, and kept her eyes fixed upon the casement. The room was in gloom, except from the partial beams of a dim night-light; and the deep silence, the proximity of the angry and roaring ocean—always a solemn and even dreadful idea by night—created in Eliza-



beth's mind a thousand exaggerated apprehensions.

She listened for footsteps along the corridor. She knew that Carew must pass that way ere he went out. She heard one of the men, appointed to keep watch all the night in the Hôtel de Guise, say to another, who was waiting to go with Carew to the shore, that there had been a gun fired, as a signal of distress, from some vessel that was sore beset, and that blue lights were seen afar off. Her fears increased to agony.

At length a quick step was heard down the corridor. Carew, armed, and followed by two armed attendants—for pirates were as dangerous almost as tempests on the channel in those times—moved rapidly onwards. He was startled as he approached an angle of the corridor to see a female figure leaning over the balustrade.

Elizabeth turned towards him. All reserve was forgotten. She clung to him; the fondness of former years burst every restraint on both sides. Carew bade the men go forward, and then clasped the unhappy Elizabeth in his arms. It was a momentary weakness—mo-

mentary, but remembered by one of those who were thus surrendered to it with everlasting and repentant humiliation of spirit. It was a momentary weakness which betrayed Elizabeth, her poor heart all full of conviction that they should meet no more, to bid her cousin forgive and forget, if ever coldness or unkindness had passed between them. It was a momentary weakness which permitted her to tell him, that if aught befel him, never—never should she forget the love of their childhood; the hopeless, miserable love of their youth.

Yes, in all this, she was most imprudent. The ecstasy of confession—that was soon over; in a few, a very few minutes, he was gone. The corridor was again silent. Elizabeth, pale as one of those fabled apparitions that hover ere the dawn wakes, stood there, listening to the blasts, until a gleam of daylight, stealing across the panels of the walls, drove her to her chamber.

## CHAPTER XI.

## ANNE OF AUSTRIA AND BUCKINGHAM.

It was noon ; and the household of Anne of Austria were breakfasting, or, as we should consider it, dining in the hall of that hôtel in which Anne of Austria—none knew why, though many guessed the cause—lingered still. No wonder, it was said, that she disliked returning to the Court of her husband, where distrust and indifference succeeded each other in the mind of Louis. The indifference was natural to his small and apathetic spirit—the distrust was infused by Richelieu. That the sanctified prelate—who never failed, however, to receive the Communion each Sabbath, and to atone for his luxurious state by personal austerities—was

no saint at heart was, indeed, a notorious fact. Neither did that conviction injure him in the estimation of the nation whom he governed, in their then lowest state of moral degradation. That he had dared to express a passionate admiration for the young Queen, which she had returned with loathing, was one of those secret passages of his life which time disclosed.

The ample board was spread in the hall, and, to the surprise of many, two Englishmen—evidently fatigued by a rapid journey—sat down at one end, below the salt. Yet they were gentlemen: one was Francis Beaumont; the other, Endymion Porter.

All wondered at their return to Amiens; but no one, possibly, was more surprised at that circumstance than themselves; nor did it seem to be a pleasant occurrence to either of these gentlemen. Beaumont, usually so gay, was gloomy and downcast, and spoke in hurried whispers to Endymion:

“I like not our service here,” he said to Endymion. “How mistrustfully we are looked at by these Frenchmen—rogues and villains all.”

“Master Beaumont, fly!” returned Endy-

mion, much excited. "Villains! know ye not their lineage to be most ancient and noble. There is the Prince de Conti, the Comte de Soissons, the Duc de Chevreuse, Madame la Marquise de Motteville—that lady who hath recently left her place in the hall. God help us! What can the boy mean! And if they be a little wild, and spendthrift—nay, play deep; or be at all unseemly in their behaviour with the ladies of the Court, are they not the first in the land? And have they not the liberty to be pleasant—nay, somewhat wanton—which meaner folk have not? God forbid we should judge them like the vulgar herd!"

"God forbid, indeed!" replied Beaumont, bitterly. "An honest English yeoman is worth them all."

"My friend, thou art of unsound mind, thus to talk irreverently of these great lords," said Endymion, with a look of horror.

Beaumont gazed at him for once contemptuously; and then leaned his head upon his hand, declared that these villanous wines had given him the headache, spoke afterwards no more, and thought of Calais.

Endymion sat calmly sipping his wine, and

gathered all that could be gleaned of public opinion from those around him. Long habituated to follow his master through the various intrigues—of which, in a moral or immoral sense, the well-trained groom of the ducal chambers thought no more than of taking his breakfast—Endymion felt somewhat afraid of *this* last adventure, in which the game was so high, and the supposed rival the greatest minister of his time. For Endymion was aware, from some of his back-stairs friends, that on one signal occasion, when Anne was listening to the conversation of Richelieu, she was surprised by a burst of passion from the Cardinal, and heard—with what consternation may be conceived—the declaration of a passionate attachment. Whilst she attempted to smother her hatred and contempt, the King entered the room. Hence her horror and her avoidance of Richelieu, though in fear and trembling; hence her refusal of any offers of mediation between her husband and herself, from a man whom she loathed.

Pursued, watched, estranged from her husband, without a real friend, with many treacherous attendants; vain, beautiful; having a

heart and a fancy warm and gay as that of any Spanish woman could naturally be ; childless—for Louis XIV. was not born until many years after—Anne, for the first time, met, in a dangerous intimacy, a man whose attractions were so remarkable as to leave a lasting impression even in the fastidious Court of her husband. Already had some love passages taken place between her and Buckingham. Endymion knew this. He did not deem it wrong—upon that point he formed no opinion ; but he esteemed it hazardous. And he listened with crafty ear, and a countenance of well-practised indifference, to the whispers around him.

Very different were the reflections which oppressed Francis Beaumont. Young in spirit as well as in age, full of confidence in human nature, enthusiastically attached to his kinsman, he was yet too shrewd not to discern the truth. His trust, if not his love for his patron, was now, if not shaken, alarmed. The freshness of his warm feelings was sullied ; and, for the first time, his ardent devotion for Buckingham was chilled by that moral sense which never dies in a well-conditioned mind.

Beaumont had experienced gentle and gene-

rous conduct from the Duchess of Buckingham. He loved her too with that affectionate respect which young men entertain for a pattern of domestic excellence—when the pattern is not set forth in harsh colours. He felt her injuries—for so his honest heart confessed them to be—deeply. He sat burning with wrath and vexation towards the whole French nation, upon which he laid all the burthen of Buckingham's delinquencies.

We are too apt, when we see one whom we esteem betrayed into temptation, to blame the particular instruments of the evil. Let us look within the tempted heart, and shall we not find therein the seeds of a moral corruption, which wanted only certain excitements to bring them into guilt?

Meantime, the Queen of France was presumed, by those below, to be receiving visitors in her dressing-room, whilst the business of the toilet was carried on. Such was her custom; and such the custom of women in exalted positions, wiser and graver than Anne of Austria.

But the talking world below were, for once, mistaken—Anne had not risen. After the fashion of her adopted country, she had received



the complimentary visits of the functionaries of the town, who had visited her, in bed.

The old-fashioned chamber, spacious, bare, dingy from the effects of time—for Amiens had not then benefited by the munificent restorations of Cardinal Richelieu—contained, in a large recess, one of those enormous beds calculated to hold several persons, of which specimens are still to be found in the ancient châteaux of France. Accommodation for seven persons is even reported to be had in some of these antique pieces of furniture; and the able historian of France in the time of the Crusades has assured us that no compliment in olden times was esteemed more graceful, than for brothers-in-arms to pass reciprocal invitations to share each other's beds. Such was their proof of a high and courtly confidence, *dans les beaux jours de la chevalerie*; and even at a much later period, Louis XIII. marked his regard for the Duc de Luynes by a similar manifestation of regard and respect.

The bed of old, so the Vicomte de Vaublanc, in his delightful work also informs us, was one of the most important objects in the household of the *grands seigneurs* of France. It was

solemnly bequeathed by will : sometimes left to hospitals, Maurice de Sully setting first the example of leaving the bed on which he died to the Hôtel-Dieu, as an incentive to other benevolent persons to make the samé bequest.

Half-reclining, half-sitting, Anne received, therefore, her subjects on a bed of singularly costly construction, and of immense size. The mattress on which she reposed was stuffed with the down from an eagle's breast, and covered with white silk, over which again was a net-work of red silken thread. Sheets of cambric, edged with the finest lace d'Alençon, exemplified the extreme delicacy of this luxurious Queen, and gave rise to the anecdote of Cardinal Mazarin, who is said to have remarked to the Queen, that the severest punishment that could be inflicted on her Majesty "would be to sleep in sheets of Holland cloth." Some reported—and the exquisite fairness of her skin seemed to attest the truth of the assertion—that the sensitiveness of her frame was such, that she could not sustain the contact of aught that was coarser than the most delicate cambric that could be woven. But Anne, though she may have often forgotten the

circumstance, *was* mortal ; and the plea thus made for inordinate luxury was the refinement of adulation. Over these costly sheets, richly embroidered, the crown of France in the centre, and bordered with the *fleur-de-lis*, was a coverlid edged with a sort of leather more fragrant than the richest perfumes, “or,” adds the chronicler, “than Thessalian cloth.” Above, was a canopy decked with plumes, supported by four bed-posts constructed of gold and ivory, carved so as to represent birds, small beasts, and garlands of flowers, and adorned with carbuncles, which shone even in the gloom of the night. The curtains were of silk, confined at each post, or *montant*, by four sapphires attached by golden threads ; over the foot of the bed lay a carpet stuffed with down ; and a stool richly gilded was placed there for the honoured lord or lady who had the right of the *tabouret*. At the head of this gorgeous bed, stiff as if set there for ever, stood a lady of middle age—the Grande Maîtresse—whose office it was always to stand at that post.

The Queen was partially dressed. She wore a loose robe, almost resembling a blouse, of blue silk, confined at the waist by a clasp of

enamel, of Limoges ; a *bonnet de nuit*, of Brussels' lace, fell gracefully over the unconfined tresses of her rich hair, which was of a colour that the troubadours of Provence long celebrated in their heroines. Her arms had no ornaments, but were simply shaded by lace ruffles, as delicate as the white and rounded wrists on which they fell.

Never had the rare attractions of this fair Spaniard been more skilfully enhanced by the accompaniments which lend to beauty the advantage of picturesque effect. The dark and rudely-painted walls of the chamber ; the scanty and even poor furniture—for the bed was the sole glory of the room—all contributed to concentrate the splendour of the spot where Anne reposed, into one point. She—with the dim light from the old and heavy casement streaming upon her—she was the sole object in that vast apartment. A few benches, a few stools, a *fauteuil* for her Majesty when she arose—those were the furniture of the chamber, with the single exception indeed, far from the bed, of the grand toilet-table, over which projected a Venetian mirror in an embossed silver frame. A superb set of golden implements for the service of the toilet

was there displayed ; and before the table was placed a *fauteuil*, the legs and back of which were richly carved and gilded ; while the arms of France were embroidered on the crimson velvet which covered the seat.

Anne, weary of the morning's receptions, would willingly have reclined somewhat longer ; but the hour at which she was expected to breakfast in public was approaching. She submitted, therefore, when the commandant of the town, in great hessian boots, had made his last bow, and backed out of her chamber, with awkward precipitancy, his sword dangling at his heels, to be assisted to rise ; to be dressed by two of her ladies, and planted, not a single observance being omitted, in the *fauteuil* before her mirror.

This was indeed, a labour of time. A bevy of Court ladies hovered behind the Queen's chair like a flight of doves, though not so gentle. To each was appointed her office. It was the privilege of the one to hand the small golden *lavoir* to her Majesty ; to another to give the towel, somewhat like a modern pocket-handkerchief in size : a third placed over the Queen's shoulders, the *robe de chambre*, a garment of

costly lace, lined with damask silk. All these were hereditary or stipulated privileges ! and had they been rewarded, the Court could not have contained the belligerent parties—whole families had been embroiled by such an insult. Anne pouted, and looked weary of the great farce ; but underwent the ceremony of the toilet with grace, and a sort of melancholy patience.

The unhappy Marie Antoinette, of whom Anne was, in many respects, the prototype, could not do as much. It was a reproach to that Princess—the nobleness of whose great character is, every year, elicited more and more—that she could not abide the slow ceremonial, and that she once or twice, until duly admonished of her fault, snatched from the hands of her ladies her clothes, rather than stand shivering until they were formally presented.

At length the last jewel was placed on Anne's arm, the last curl frizzed and adjusted on her brow ; then, the Doña Estifania, an aged Spanish lady who attended on the Queen, stepping before the rest, whispered something in the language of her country to her Majesty.

Anne's face was crimsoned ; but recovering herself, she said, in French :

“ Father Francis ! doth he crave an audience ? Ah, I forgot ! He hath somewhat, no doubt, to say of the poor wounded soldier that he spoke to me of yesternight.”

“ Your Majesty will then see him alone ?” returned Doña Estifania, in French.

“ Yes,” replied the Queen, waving her hand, and looking around her ; and in an instant, the high-born group retreated out into an adjoining chamber.

Suspicion however, was aroused in many minds. The Almoner had already been received by his royal mistress, and had gone forth, followed by two pages, to dispense, in public resorts, his alms, from a gold-embroidered bag, heavy with gold pieces. Quick ears could catch the sounds of altercation, in the rich accents of the Spanish tongue. Doña Estifania, once the nurse, and ever the confidential servant of the Queen, was privileged to speak with freedom to her mistress.

“ The Almoner hath not yet appeared,” said one of the ladies to another.

“ And yet, the door hath been opened, and closed.”

Scandal would have been bold, had it not been remembered that the Comtesse de Lannoi, the

Grande Maîtresse, and a lady of exemplary propriety, whose office was to stand at the head of the Queen's bed, whilst she gave audience, was still in the chamber.

The doors of ancient edifices in France were constructed in olden times, like porches, with several sides. The ladies peeping out into the gallery, therefore, heard one of these doors open and shut, but could not see who it was that entered.

It was Buckingham.

He came forward, radiant, not only in his gorgeous dress, sparkling with jewels, but that which no external circumstances could bestow, the radiance of hope—presumptuous hope. Why was not the Queen surprised and indignant at his return? His own confident and guilty heart might answer that question. Anne had been apprized of his intention by the Duchesse de Chevreuse. As he perceived that not only Doña Estifania, but the Comtesse de Lannoi were in the room, the countenance of the Duke fell.

He bent on one knee, and, as he kissed the Queen's hand, he said, in a low voice, in English :



“Madam! may not your servant see you for an instant, alone?” Anne looked timidly around her. “Well, then,” she said, after a moment’s hesitation, to the Grande Maitresse and to Doña Estifania, “for an instant leave me.”

Her words seemed to paralyze the two ladies. They looked at each other. Nevertheless, they slowly retired; and for a few brief but important moments, Buckingham was left alone with the Queen.

That interval—there is little doubt, and indeed Anne’s subsequent acknowledgment proved the fact—was employed in the mad disclosure of a criminal—but, alas! not hopeless passion. Much did he say—he was listened to with blushes, and in silence. His eyes spoke what his lips durst not fully disclose. Anne turned pale, and trembled. A solitary being in that gay and heartless Court, who was to her an exile, the very boldness of Buckingham’s suit, the danger which he incurred, spoke sincerity. Neglected, vilified, yet flattered, she may have been deeply touched by the ardour of the most graceful and dangerous man of his age. As he went on, and breathed yet more openly sentiments which

she but too well understood, she placed her hands before her face, as if she would not, could not meet his glance. But when, encouraged by the agitation he had caused, the rash Buckingham ventured to kiss the border of a rich shawl which hung over the back of her *fauteuil*, Anne drew back. She remembered—such were her own words—“that she was Queen of France.” Words, looks, sighs, supplications had failed to recal her to a sense of her position; but a breach of etiquette did the work.

A long and angry silence alone, however, marked her displeasure. Buckingham in vain, with clasped hands, implored her forgiveness. The Comtesse de Lannoi, struck more by the stillness of the room than by the first agitated, but subdued tones of the Duke's voice, and eager to save her mistress from future evil, perhaps from subsequent degradation—for who could say what Richelieu might not do?—courageously braved her mistress's anger, and entered the room.

The Grande Maîtresse was a grave and formal lady, whose look was well calculated to strike terror into any heart. Suddenly, her

dignified figure appeared behind the *fauteuil*, before which Buckingham still knelt.

"My Lord Duke," said the Comtesse, "I must crave your pardon, when I say that your behaviour is inconsistent with the rules of her Majesty's Court. I pray you, rise."

"Madam," returned Buckingham, haughtily, "I am no Frenchman, and therefore not amenable to the laws of your French etiquette. When her Majesty deigns to bid me arise, I shall obey—and not until then."

He looked at the Queen—she trembled beneath his gaze; but recollecting herself, she turned towards him: "Yes," she said, becoming very pale, and speaking as if pronouncing her own doom; "arise! and leave the room."

The Duke instantly obeyed. He went forth, not as a disgraced and dismissed courtier, but triumphant as a lover whose suit had been heard.

\* \* \* \*

A mystery still hangs over this painful story of folly or of guilt.

When that surpassing form, which she is said to have loved, had begun to moulder in

the dust ; when even the tragedy of his death had been almost forgotten ; when her own beauty had ceased to dazzle, and time had shown in their true colours the vanities of her early career, Anne, in her moments of confidence, dwelt on these passages so brief in duration, but so productive to her of bitter reflection. In softened tones she referred to Buckingham's presumption, and lingered, perhaps too fondly, on his memory. Had this been all, posterity might have pitied and pardoned the weakness of a neglected and beautiful woman, endowed with the ordinary sensibilities of her sex.

It *may* have been all : God only knows how nearly the weakness of Anne's principles, thus proved, may have merged into positive guilt. Thus to express it, is to speak as the world speaks : in sober truth, there *was* guilt in her preference for Buckingham ; there was levity in her conduct—was there more ? Did the dark and horrible mystery of one ill-starred victim of political tyranny owe his existence to the unhappy Queen ? Were the features concealed by the *iron mask*, those of one who might have claimed the throne of France,

had not that invention of diabolical cruelty concealed them from every eye? Was the retribution so signal that on Anne's *first-born* the curse fell; or is the whole of that story a fable, contrived to cast odium upon the dead, and to degrade royalty?

' Anne had, however, her share of punishment, and it was soon experienced. The small chances of peace in her wretched union were annihilated for a time. The jealousy and hatred of Richelieu; the more complete, and for the time hopeless, alienation from her husband; the banishment of those servants whom she most loved, were the immediate effects of all that had occurred.

And Buckingham went on his way, resolved, at the first opportunity, to return to France.

## CHAPTER XII.

## MASTER LAMBE, THE PHILOSOPHER.

EVERY one has experienced the soothing influence of a calm Sabbath in England. Calm in no other country is that holy day. The absence of many noises, to which the ear is painfully accustomed on week-days ; the sounds of church bells ; the pleasant words uttered by the young and free, all tend to sanctify the rest. In the village the heavy anvil has ceased ; the wheelwright's lumbered work-place has not closed, but his craft is suspended : he is standing by a broken waggon, with his best coat on. The plough is left on the grange fields ; the little bustling shop, full of buttons and tea, and raisins and needles, and tallow candles and

calicos, is shut up, and its important mistress "is gone out for the day."

What a volume of cheerful thoughts is concentrated in those few words, "gone out for the day!" They speak of a best bonnet and a clean apron; of diligent washing, a careful *coiffure*, and of a cap, white as the hawthorn blossoms; of a well-preserved umbrella, and tightly-fitting new shoes. They speak of good wishes to those left behind, and a long bracing walk to some far-off farm or cottage, gossiping by the way with a choice companion; for the humbler classes seldom, except on business, walk alone. They speak of an honest welcome and loud greetings; of a noisy and, as some may deem it, vulgar meeting; but I, for one, see beneath the provincial twang, and the tones that shake one's nerves, the very essence of true politeness. They speak, finally, of brown bread and tea; of much talk, much civility; for the English poor are complimentary to each other. They speak of a walk home, whilst the moon's crescent is gilding the little horse-pond in the meadow with its earliest rays of light, and the bat is flapping athwart your path; and the most languid and distant cawing of the last

rook, not yet in bed, is falling on the ear as the foot, cooled by the long rest of the cottage banquet, tramples over closing flowers, heavy even so soon with the night dew, and bending to their repose.

In London, how different! But the day "which sets the labourer free" has its charms even in her heated streets. The Sunday look gleams upon every face. Many streets are almost empty and silent. Poverty, ashamed of herself, skulks away into its corners. Ah! it is melancholy to reflect how many are *unseen* on that day, which I would fain call, with the Puritans of old, "God's day."

Let us not murmur. In years gone by, matters were even worse. Fearful pestilences and non-abstinence from toil often desolated the narrow streets of the miserable metropolis—miserable, because where there is manifest inequality, not only in the fortunes, but in the very chances of existence between man and man, misery must appear. The palace here—there, the den. Here, fresh air and blooming gardens, a boat, a coach, horses for riding, health and fine clothes—there, pent-up wretchedness, of which modern philanthropists can form some



idea as being the general portion of that class in which it now exists, let us hope, only in certain districts.

At the period when those lived whose fate this narrative discloses, a curse fell upon the land.—Plague slew her thousands. Even whilst the young and royal bride took possession of her appointed home—Somerset House, where Capuchin friars were seen crossing themselves as they met heretics in the Strand—even when she knelt to mass in her chapel there, there were hundreds dying not far from her palace, of this direful malady.

Why then, one Sabbath, when nothing that concerned either business or pleasure could be involved, did the Lady Purbeck go forth, braving that from which the stoutest hearts might shrink?

One Sunday afternoon she set out, masked, as was often the custom of ladies in those days to walk from Hatton House to Whitechapel. The road lay across fields. Boys were then allowed to play at goff and bowls in those fields, otherwise the path would have been lonesome and unsafe for Lady Purbeck and her maid Priscilla.

They appeared, however, perfectly fearless ; they walked rapidly, but talked by the way. Their conversation turned upon the plague ; and Priscilla had a volume of melancholy and foreboding ready, after the fashion of her class, to pour forth.

“ Some say,” she observed—for she was a rigid Puritan—“ some say that the pestilence in King James’s time, as also,” she added, lowering her voice, “ in his present Majesty’s reign, hath been sent in judgment for these unrighteous papistical marriages, provoking the wrath of Him who hath sent the plagues upon Egypt of old.”

Priscilla cast up her eyes underneath her mask as she spoke. She was a maiden after Lady Hatton’s own heart—noted for piety and austerity of life, but thinking a prudent lie no evil when the motive was sufficient. Crafty as well as plausible, Priscilla had contrived a work of wonder—she had learned to deceive and govern Lady Hatton. She could have deceived the Arch-Deceiver himself: she had deceived one who was all subtlety ; she had governed the ungovernable. It was Lady Purbeck’s destiny to have this woman near her, poisoning her

youth by her corrupting influence, and precipitating her misfortunes by her counsels.

There was entire confidence between them.

"I think," said Lady Purbeck, sadly, "there be more marriages than those, the which God might judge amiss; in truth, *all* that be made now-a-days; for are not we poor maidens of high degree bought with a price?"

"And then," Priscilla put in her word, "cast away forthwith, as one may do with a bauble bought too dearly."

Lady Purbeck did not reply: she walked on across a meadow, now more lonely than the preceding one. Her eye caught a glimpse of a man's head looking over the hedge of the field through which she had passed. Although the circumstance was accidental, it alarmed her.

"We are watched, I protest," she said, quickly.

"I know not who can know us," replied Priscilla; "you, my Lady, in your old kersey mantle, and in Alice the scullion's head-gear. Nevertheless, I will take out my prayer-book, and folk may think that we are on our road to St. Leonard's at Shoreditch."

The two young women went quickly for-

ward, Priscilla displaying a book of Common Prayer.

“ How sweet are the songs of Zion !” she remarked presently, when, being far from the spying eyes which had frightened them, they relaxed their pace.

“ Yes, unto them that have a peaceful mind, and a clear heart to receive the like,” rejoined Lady Purbeck, trying to check a sigh.

“ Unto the righteous alway, as my Lady saith,” replied Priscilla, carrying out the principle that the more sinful our intentions may be, the greater ought to be our professions.

“ Thou mayst be righteous ; but I—” Lady Purbeck began, in a tone deep dejection.

“ If thou wert a little frolicksome, and didst love a proper young man, sometime thy sweetheart,” answered Priscilla, “ who forsooth is to judge or condemn a lady of such parents, such rank and wealth, like the vulgar herd ? As the royal David saith—”

“ No, no, Priscilla : I will not have thee quote Holy Writ in my behalf,” interrupted Lady Purbeck, quickly. “ I am,” she added—and her voice was that of deep humiliation—“ a wretched,

undone, and miserable sinner. A hypocrite I will not prove."

She was then silent during the long, long way which these two women were obliged to traverse, because there were then no public conveyances in that part of the town; and their business was such, that no private carriage could have been made available. At last—very late in the afternoon—they reached the miserable village of Whitechapel, and stood, having twice knocked at a wretched door, in one of its lowest courts, reeking with heat, pestilence, and foul odours. It was silent as the grave; and, indeed, not unlike one vast grave was the whole parish of Whitechapel. The churchyards of that large and poor district had been filled during the pestilence of the last reign, which had there first shown its dire symptoms. Again had it commenced in that same doomed quarter; and many had been its victims even when Lady Purbeck braved its contact.

There is a sort of stillness which seems to freeze the blood—the stillness of a thickly-peopled locality. Not a sound broke that

silence—the indication that all the usual causes of noise were checked—except when, at some distance, the slow movement of a dead-cart reminded those who heard it of the doom that was so near.

“Yet even now”—Lady Purbeck appeared as if answering her own thoughts as she spoke—“carousals and dancing are every day going on in the Court. Little do they know there, what happeneth *here*.”

“No,” said Priscilla, “sinners as they are. I will knock once more. Master Lambe may even be at his devotions.”

“Devotions! Hath *he* the presumption to pray?” asked Lady Purbeck.

“And wherefore not, my Lady? A learned leech, skilful to cure—”

“Ay, and to kill, Priscilla! My God! what am I about?” cried Lady Purbeck, suddenly. She clasped her hands in anguish. “Priscilla, take me away. I *will* not see him. I feel—I feel the air all so close about me—I shall catch the pestilence, and then—God help me!”

She had taken off her mask in the paroxysm. A face so woe-begone was seen beneath the

shadow of that high projecting house, seldom to be exceeded in its expression of misery, even in those precincts of penury and sorrow. Priscilla took the mask from her hand, and peremptorily put it on her face.

“For Heaven’s sake, keep the mask on! I was with my Lady Somerset here once, and *she* never budged nor flinched, nor moved the mask from off her face, believe me.”

“Lady Somerset! And am I like unto her? Am I so lost? Is my case like unto hers?” said Lady Purbeck, shuddering.

“I must make bold to say, thou must needs hold thy peace, Madam,” replied Priscilla.

At this moment the street-door was opened, and a voice from the dark passage within said: “Come in.” No one appeared. They went in. The passage and the narrow staircase were almost dark; but Priscilla, as if well acquainted with the place, groped her way up, preceded by the shadow of a man’s figure.

A door opened, and the unhappy Lady Purbeck found herself in a small room, the window of which commanded no better prospect than that of leads and chimneys, dark, smoke-stained houses, crossing at right angles,

and bits of windows, out of which hung filthy-looking clothes to dry, or to air. Many of these houses, the backs of which were seen from this room, were wholly closed, and emptied of their miserable inmates by the plague.

Lady Purbeck sat down upon the nearest bench, and put her hand before her eyes. It was some moments before she could summon courage to look up and confront the man who had, she believed, her destiny in his hands. She heard him speak, she heard Priscilla compliment him on the situation of his dwelling. Arch hypocrite! she propitiated him as she believed, by her audacious flattery.

“Yes, Mistress,” replied a bland voice, “oh yes, the White Chapel hath ever been renowned for its wholesomeness, until, as thou and I well know, Mistress Priscilla, this Papistry hath brought this curse of plague upon us. But let that pass; I am no bigot, and have dealt with Papist and Protestant, Anabaptist, Non-conformist—nought doth offend my stomach, save a Jew.”

“A Jew!” cried Priscilla; “Oh, foul! horrible!”



“My friends,” resumed Mr. Lambe, grandly, “do love to come into my poor house, in that, when here, plague cometh not nigh them. No! I have a charm in yonder phial, that doth disinfect the foul air: see, Mistress.”

He took down from a shelf a small bottle, and pouring its contents into a common earthen dish on the floor, a thick and most suspiciously infernal smell was carried in vapour through the apartment, at which Priscilla marvelled, and was ready to fall on her knees before “honest Master Lambe.”

“Is it so, indeed?” said Lady Purbeck, taking her hands from her eyes. “Am I then safe here?”

“Safe, sweet Lady, as in heaven.”

Lady Purbeck looked earnestly at Master Lambe, as he pronounced those words in a soothing tone. He was a man of no ordinary celebrity in his day. Infamy having, for some good cause, marked him in his juvenile career as her own, Master Lambe, “honest Master Lambe,” as Priscilla cantingly called him, took “to science and philosophy,” by way of a livelihood. His science was a compound of pretended witch-

craft, medical lore, and impudence; his philosophy was audacious mendacity, made up and mingled with an impertinent shrewdness, which detected, by the art of a fox-like cunning, the hearts of men—to say nothing of those of women. They, indeed, were his chief customers, his stay in life, his worshippers and benefactresses—his victims. They placed themselves in his power, and seldom ceased through the whole of their miserable lives to feel its grasp. Occult was his science; secret their visits. Many women of the highest rank had repaired to Lambe, and sought his advice and aid. They reaped, of course, as they had sown.

Master Lambe, however, was no unsightly necromancer. He disabused his votaries of their common impressions of gentlemen of his craft, and of philosophical celebrity. He was round in face, and inclined to a respectable corpulency; very soft and coaxing in his manner, which always bordered—for he knew his lady votaries durst not resist to it—upon familiarity. There was something horribly insulting in his laugh; it was perfectly taunting; but those who followed the idol of

Whitechapel must needs bear taunting and freedom.

With his hands in his pockets, the pockets of very seemly kersey breeches—for Master Lambe was attentive to his toilet—he continued to gaze on Lady Purbeck. Seldom, indeed—and Lambe was an enthusiast about the charms of those whom he saw in this degrading intimacy—was a face of greater loveliness uplifted in its sorrow, its appealing sorrow, to address him. Lady Purbeck had gained in expression what she had lost in happiness. Her secret misery had given an elevation to her beauty. Her fair but childish face had wanted hitherto some one pervading sentiment: it was there, and the touching aspect of despair gave a tragic solemnity to her countenance. She spoke, at length, with an effort.

“Master Lambe,” she said, “I will be plain with thee. I am an unhappy wife—I am most unhappy. Common rumour hath assigned to thee, not only the wisdom to foretel, but also the skill to change and shape the fashion of destiny. I would—I would,” she added, gasping, “thou couldst change *mine*.”

“And wherefore not, most gracious and

beauteous lady?" replied Lambe, gazing at her with a freedom that caused the lost, but not hardened, Lady Purbeck to shrink with disgust. "So fair, so bewitching a lady should find contentment, and disport herself pleasantly withal."

"Pleasantly!" repeated Lady Purbeck—"pleasantly!" "'Tis long since I have known pleasure. But, Sir, to be brief: must I needs tell thee *all* my hapless story, ere thou canst give me comfort—and read me," she added, looking anxiously around her—"the hap of my future life?"

The last words were uttered in a desponding tone; and the reference to her hopeless future brought tears into her eyes.

"I am very young," she said, piteously; "very, very young. I *must* have relief—live, I cannot, as I do now. No, Priscilla, no, I cannot live in deceit. Shame, I must bear; but longer I will not, for all thy counsels, degrade my *home*."

"What then," whispered Lambe, stooping down close to her; "have there been merely certain love passages between ye—or *more*?"

He bent till his face almost touched her ear. Lady Purbeck shrank.

"Must I then," she resumed, in great confusion, "must I wholly unbosom myself to thee, or fail in aught that can solace a heart that, I do assure thee, Master Lambe, is breaking fast."

"Thou wouldst not look to a physician to heal thee of a malady which thou didst not fully confess to him, fair lady," said Lambe, insinuatingly.

"Master Lambe is a gentleman of probity, and a pious Christian," interposed Priscilla, "and thou mayst safely trust him."

"Then, Master Lambe, for once and all," said Lady Purbeck, with a desperation that marked her intense desire of relief and aid, "hear this. The story of my youth, my sometime love for Sir Robert Howard, my marriage—all that thou knowest; and now, know more: I have *disgraced* my husband. To-morrow night he cometh home from France. Whither can I flee to shun him? how can I flee? or where? Oh! nowhere, nowhere! I am lost, undone!"

She rose in her agony, and her face was

pale; her lips quivered. Priscilla took her hand: it was cold and tremulous.

"All this is well," thought the attendant, who was closely leagued, as many waiting-women in those days were, with Lambe. Avarice, the prevailing vice of ladies'-maids in that age, suggested to her that the deeper the abasement of her mistress, the greater the profit to Lambe—"honest Master Lambe," and his pious accomplice.

"Ay, ay!" said Lambe, coaxingly, "it will make thee comfortable to make unto thy servant, thy humble servant, a clean confession. Albeit, what hast thou done? Nought but what half the fine and gallant ladies of our late King's Court have done before thee. Gracious lady, I speak not of King Charles's Court; for 'tis, as I hear, much degenerated, and mighty pitiful and dolorous; but in blessed King James's days of jollity, there was not," he whispered, "one wedded wife that might cast a stone at thee. There was my Lady Somerset—"

"Master Lambe," interrupted Lady Purbeck, haughtily, "I ask thee not to extenuate, far less even so much as to *name* my fault. That

it is great, I know ; that it might be greater, I know too. Thou, by thy skill, Master Lambe—oh ! pardon me, if, in my extremity, I have spoke hardly to thee—thou canst deal with my misery. Show me, by thy prescience, what will befall me ! Endow me, with thy science, with the means to avoid present ill !”

Master Lambe seemed to be considering the circumstances of her case. In vain might his votaries look around the obscure chamber, in which for security he thought fit to dwell, for any implements, or nostrums, or learned occult books, which betokened the great necromancer, and profound philosopher : no, to such vulgar acts Lambe rose superior. A single row of phials on a shelf formed his whole battery of supernatural force. There was no object to divide with him the attention of his votaries : all was concentrated in the great Lambe himself.

“ My Lady,” he said, after a long meditation, during which Lady Purbeck’s eyes were fixed with a wild and anxious expression on his face, “ hast thou courage ?”

“ I had once !” she answered, sighing.

“ Thou dost loathe thy husband ?”

"Ah, Sir! even so!—as a woman who hath given her heart passionately—desperately to another, ever loathes the man she is condemned to love!"

"'Tis no rare case: my Lady Somerset did ever loathe and detest her Lord—though a gentleman of seemly and noble presence. "Well, Madam, he must loathe you: yea, to procure you comfort, you must needs be hated by him."

"Indeed—indeed, I wish he saw me in my true colours, Master Lambe! For he is ever considerate unto me; and his kindness doth sting even my hardened and reprobate conscience. Would that he knew all!—save that my mother would forthwith banish me and my babe, sending us ignominiously into the world, that pitieth not!"

"No, Madam," returned Lambe, "'tis not meet that thy Lord know all—'tis not needful. 'Twere better," he added, casting up his eyes to heaven, "that public morals be not hurt and affronted by such disclosures!"

He put his hand to his forehead, and seemed lost for many moments in deep thought. That interval was salutary to Lady



Purbeck: it gave her time to recollect herself. Ignorant and credulous, she was not naturally weak. Some portion—alas! how little! of the hereditary sense and judgment of her family had been allotted to her. It had been suffered to wither, as mental gifts do wither when wholly uncultured; but there was still, beneath much levity, a capacity of no contemptible kind. Reflection, and that best of guides, common-sense, were, indeed, wanting. Half-educated—like many of the high-born women of her day—and, therefore, easily dazzled by pretension, Lady Purbeck, however, was not singular in her belief in the oracular wisdom of Master Lambe. Quackery of every description has flourished, and more especially among the highest ranks, in the nineteenth century: it is not, therefore, to be wondered at, that a misguided young woman should, in the seventeenth century, lend a ready faith to that audacity which, whether it assumes to cure and to soothe by necromancy or by *clairvoyance*, by phials of nameless medicines or by mesmerism, is based still, as it ever has been, upon falsehood and cupidity.

In the seventeenth century, however, there

was this difference—the folly was made penal. Awful disclosures of combinations between the professors of occult sciences and characters of the most infamous description, are to be read in the secret history of those days. The power resorted to was generally employed in deeds of darkness, and to cover guilt; and even “honest Master Lambe” was obliged to practise his dark arts in the extremity of the metropolis, and in the most obscure retreat that it could afford. Lady Purbeck had, however, time to recollect herself. Persuaded by Priscilla, when in a paroxysm of misery and shame, to have recourse to this man, the danger, the degradation she had encountered, suddenly became apparent to her mind.

“And can a creature like that vulgar, low-born, presumptuous wretch,” she thus argued within herself, “minister to my anguish? Ah, I have some friends still—Elizabeth! would that thou wert with me!”

Priscilla awakened her from her reverie.

“Look, Madam,” she said, pulling her sleeve: “good Master Lambe hath well deliberated on thy case, and is prepared to give thee his counsels.”

“ Well, then,” replied Lady Purbeck, “ I would fain hear them. But this I do here protest—that should aught that is recommended unto me, be apt to hurt another, I will none of it.” She paused for an instant. “ Oh ! that I could take of some potion and sleep everlastingly ! But repose—repose is not for me !”

“ Madam, be calm,” answered Master Lambe.

“ Be calm !” said Priscilla. “ What ! is my Lady faint ? Open the window, Master Lambe, with speed !”

“ No, no,” cried Lady Purbeck, “ the foul air is tainted all around with pestilence—open it not. Now I am myself. Give me, Sir, your physic, and let me hence !”

“ This, my Lady,” said the impostor, “ is for your Ladyship’s own health”—he put into her hands a small powder ;—“ ’twill comfort much your spirit, for ’tis a ghostly as well as a bodily remedy. This, by the high science wherewith your servant is supernaturally gifted, is a charm against all adverse chances. Wear it, Madam”—he put a small chain of steel wire around her wrist—“ ever and ay ; so long shalt thou have prosperous love, and be blessed evermore—Amen !”

"And a free heart ; a fancy not so perturbed as of late?" asked Lady Purbeck, somewhat reassured by the confident manner of this "eminent" man, and vacillating between distrust and belief.

"Yea, verily, peace will be thy lot. And with him whom thou dost love," said Lambe, jocosely, "shall thy days be passed. I know it by my art."

"Worthy Master Lambe! Honest Master Lambe!" exclaimed Priscilla.

"Ah!" said Lady Purbeck, "could that be so, innocently, how would I bless thee—and reward thee, too," she added, after a moment's pause, drawing from a pocket by her side, a heavy purse.

"You will offend Master Lambe," said Priscilla, "in that he practiseth for the good of his fellow-men, alone."

"I—I would not touch one of those gold pieces," exclaimed Lambe, "for *myself*—but for the poor who languish, my gracious lady, under the pestilence, 'twere a solace to buy them wine and other dainties proper in their extremity. And—"

"Ah, good Sir! take it—take all, I pr'ythee.

Priscilla, hast thou not more? Take also this, Master Lambe: 'tis a comfort to my poor heart to give—perhaps to atone to Him who judgeth my sin!”

She cast up her tearful eyes to heaven. Master Lambe, accustomed to deal with the desperate and hardened ladies of the Court, settled in his own mind that this fair, this very fair young lady had not the spirit that became her station.

“And now—what more? for time presseth sore,” inquired Lady Purbeck.

“Touching thy Lord—shrink not. These drops—see how clear and ethereal they are—will cleanse his brain of all foul doubts touching thy fidelity: these, dark and turgid, also will change his ghostly nature, turning his love for thee into loathing. The compound of these twain effects shall be, that he cease to love thee; cease, likewise, to doubt and to mistrust thee; so shalt thou have ease and security. Go therefore hence, comforted. I will, meantime, converse with those powers unseen,” he added, in a low and solemn tone, “which can inform me further. And when we meet again—”

“Never, never,” cried Lady Purbeck, “shall

we meet again ! No, Sir, I have tempted Heaven, and provoked my Maker this once—never more will I cross thy threshold. Farewell !”

She rushed down the dark staircase. As she went, the groans of a dying man in one of the chambers, the wail of grief in a woman’s voice, made her stop to listen and to shudder.

She escaped into the outer air. The sun had set, and the streets of Whitechapel were entirely deserted : above that penury and plague-stricken district, rose the pure moon, shining both “on the just and unjust,” and illuminating the abodes of misery. Lady Purbeck cast a hasty look around her. It was strange for one bred up in every delicacy to be at that hour in such haunts ; but guilt, as well as necessity, brings strange company together.

She walked so rapidly, that Priscilla could hardly and breathlessly expatiate on the merits and erudition of Master Lambe ; at last, after more than an hour’s walking, they again found themselves in the streets, but still at some distance from Hatton House.

.. The streets of London were then not lighted, except by the moon, which fortunately kept

them somewhat more free than usual from pickpockets and highwaymen. Many a jest was levelled at the two young serving-women, as they were called, in masks, as they almost ran through the lanes of the city, and came in sight of St. Paul's, then the rendezvous of the great and little world of London. There they stopped short.

"He said he would be here at eight o' th' clock," whispered Lady Purbeck; "but he hath of late been often untrue to his promise. What can I expect else—I who am myself so untrue?"

"Good, my Lady, you will fret yourself into your grave," said Priscilla. "And now, you know, all will prosper, as Master Lambe hath affirmed."

Lady Purbeck was silent. She soon, however, uttered an expression of joy:

"There he is—there is Howard! Priscilla, walk slowly after us."

She rushed towards a figure, also disguised, and his face masked, and clung to his arm.

"Well, and what news?" said Sir Robert Howard. "Any comfort in our extremity?"

"Oh, Robert! none—none! There is no comfort save in that which should not be—our love!"

Sir Robert looked at her, and said:

"Thou art very pale! Hath this man scared thee?"

"Am I pale? I have been where the pestilence ever stalketh abroad, Robert. But Master Lambe can disinfect the plague. I am safe."

"Maybe 'tis the moonshine. And thy—thy Lord: when cometh he back?"

Lady Purbeck answered:

"To-night, to-morrow—*any* night. And the Duke hath also purposed to come unto York House, seeing that the nuptials are over, and the Queen hath kept and is keeping her state at Somerset House."

"So they are both coming anon? And what is to be done?"

"Robert, dear Robert, my true love, save thyself. Escape unto the Hague; let not their vengeance fall upon thee. Believe me, I give no credit to this man Lambe's assistance in this matter. Thou wilt be imprisoned, should my father know that—that *our* child cannot



inherit Purbeck's name and lands. Oh, Howard! he *must* know it—I cannot longer keep this dreadful secret! Thou being safe, I shall soon follow thee, love; and though in shame I shall live all my days, I shall not hear my father's woe, I shall not hear my mother's curse. I shall not have the loathsomeness of *his* caresses, when I know that I am but in name his wife—in heart, in all, another's."

"Check that passion of tears," replied Howard coldly. "'Tis no contentment to go now across the seas, just when the Court revels are begun, and all the world doth disport itself."

"But to be safe! Oh, Robert! thou knowest not to what the hatred of my parents doth or will lead them! Were I but undone—a very wretch, and undiscovered in my sin; were it not loss of rank—of lands—of all that my mother doth affect in life, I might still call their home mine. Still would their protecting care cherish the poor and miserable culprit. But to be barefaced, to confess to sin, is to be a castaway for evermore. On thee will the penalty fall: fines, imprisonment—maiming, perchance!"

Sir Robert coldly let her hand fall from his

arm, and walked on moodily apart. Lady Purbeck had already reaped one consequence of her sin: she had read the character of him for whom she had sacrificed everything valuable in life to woman. Selfish, and self-indulgent; incapable of deep feeling; vindictive, but cowardly; yet endowed with a certain fascination of manner, and with talents that rivetted a chain round worthier hearts than his own, Howard bitterly lamented the entanglement into which—such was his expression—“he had been betrayed.”

“And what,” he said, almost angrily, “are we to do when we arrive at the Hague? How to live? My patrimony, as thou knowest, is well-nigh spent; and thy dower, our good name being blighted, will be escheated, I trow?”

“I trust not!” said the unfortunate Frances, weeping. “I trust that he will not let us perish for want.”

“’Twere better far,” said Howard, moodily, “to play the dissembler awhile, than to lose all thy dower, and to burthen others.”

“Others!” exclaimed Lady Purbeck;

"others, Howard? Dost thou reproach me, that I may be a burthen and a beggar? I would not, in very deed, take from thy small portion aught, had I any friend in this wide world to succour me. My brothers would spurn me from them, could they know all; and that thou knowest."

"Well; wailing and moaning will not mend matters," said Howard, coldly. "There is thy mother's house. For God's sake quench this passion of tears, and—to-morrow I will write to thee what can be done."

"To-morrow!" said Lady Purbeck, holding fast the extended hand; "to-morrow at noon I shall be, masked, at the garden-gate fronting to the north. Oh, fail me not!"

Sir Robert let her hand fall; and turning away, his quick steps were heard along the unpaved causeway of Holborn Hill. Frances seemed to listen to them stupified. She gazed after the shadow of his figure in the moonshine, and lost it in the deep shades near Cornhill. Then she crept into the fair gardens of her proud home, and, calmed by the breath of flowers and the plashing of fountains, by the

air of *home*, the peace, the security of those delicious gardens, she raised her eyes to heaven with a mute expression of thankfulness.

Sir Robert meanwhile went on his way. But scarcely had he ascended Cornhill than he was seized by two men—city constables, and arrested on a charge of which he was to be more fully informed when examined the next day before certain commissioners.

## CHAPTER XIII.

## DOMESTIC HARMONY AND DOMESTIC DISCORDS.

A FAMILY council was held the next night in York House. Honour or dishonour, concealment or revenge, these were the topics upon which the Duke of Buckingham, his mother, and the Duchess deliberated.

The Duke had been at home only two days. His return from France ; his splendid appearance at the nuptials of his Sovereign ; his progress, followed by a great retinue, emulating that of the royal bridegroom himself into London ; are they not in the Books of the Chronicles ? And were not his haughty bearing, his arrogant display, his fatal contempt of public opinion, the theme of every

tongue, from the humblest serving-man to the proudest peer of the realm ?

Yes ; he had that ominous misfortune to be hated, perhaps unjustly, by the common people of his own land.

It seemed, on this evening, that the Duke had grown morose. Sometimes a listless indifference to every theme ; sometimes a reckless impetuosity ; sometimes an arrogant and overbearing and contradictory temper proved how the finest natures can alter ; for he was habitually complacent, courteous, and placable.

By the side of the huge fireplace—lighted up for her especial benefit, though it was the height of summer still—sat one, who never during the discussions, which were prolonged, took her eyes from his face. Those eyes were still bright and beaming ; and still almost beautiful was the fair face, which seemed rather that of an elder sister than of a mother. The Countess of Buckingham, who thus gazed upon the ever-changing countenance of her son, had retained—and why was it so?—her freshness and loveliness, whilst lines of care and age had begun to show in the Duke the havoc of passion and of a courtier's career.

Was it, as most people believed, that she was a stoic at heart? A woman, born to buffet with destiny, and to preserve in the contest the calm and steady spirit which is not always the symptom of a lofty mind? Or was it that, having in her youth passed through great adversities, she looked upon them as the conditions of life; and, having made that contract with fate, she wisely murmured not at what it so sternly exacted from her?

Her apathy irritated her son.

"By my troth, mother, thou dost argue the matter as though it were not of note, that one of our name should be held up to common people's scorn, pointed at, scoffed at, a mark for all those—and many there be—that hate our family; and thou dost treat all these disasters with thy wonted—'tis sad—'tis very sad—when I should conceit my lady-mother would storm and rave. Verily, I have beheld her more choleric over the tearing of a ruffle, or a mishap to her best coif."

"Assuredly," said the Countess, "I am sore chagrined."

"But the culprit," resumed the Duke, pacing the room in his rage, "shall rue it. What!

shall a spurious branch be thrust upon us? Our coat-armour, perchance, vilified by a bar sinister? The name of Villiers, that hath since the days of William of Normandy been honoured here, and in our ancient possessions in France,"—the Duke checked a sigh as he spoke—"be foully disgraced by a base-born son? 'Tis a thing for my enemies to glory in."

"All I can say is this," replied the Countess, "that it pleaseth me not a little that Lady Hatton's proud stomach is properly rebuked. She hath ever exulted over *our* family; as though, forsooth, the Cecils were the Kings and Queens of the earth."

"Let her look to it. I have this very night information (one of my servants having espied the same, for I sent him out scout-wise to watch my Lady Purbeck), *certain* information that she hath been—yes, even she—unto the Whitechapel, with strong presumption of having dealings with that base fellow Lambe, whose very neck is ripe for the gallows at any hour."

The Countess held up her hands.

"'Tis criminal, then?"

"Ay! my Lady, 'tis criminal. I will have



a commission on't. As to her paramour—and her—'tis a thing too common and fashionable of late years, that certain ladies of our Court should permit themselves such license. But, when Lady Purbeck doth resort to necromancers and quacks, the matter becometh the subject of a prosecution."

"My Lady Hatton will have cause to shut up her banqueting hall and her gallery," said the Countess-mother.

"Ay! and her husband to open his coffers; for, by the Lord! if he pay not down a round sum, I will imprison them both."

"And art thou judge—jury—witness—and Sovereign Lord?" asked the Duchess of Buckingham, coming gently forward, but speaking with a firmness that even her gentle nature could assume when duty bade her be firm. "And, can we prove her guilt? And, if proved, is it not our bounden duty to pardon? Mother, pity this poor young thing. Let her go hence—beyond seas—to hide her shame, if shame it be. Ye know," added the Duchess, looking at both these, her relations, "she hath never affected my brother Purbeck—the marriage was enforced—and—"

“And what?” asked the Duke, noticing that she coloured and hesitated.

“And are there not others in the world, whom it more behoveth to give a fair example, who do the like?” The Duchess fixed her eyes upon her husband’s face as she spoke. “If she be frail, are there not others alike frail? Oh, let us hide her sin and her sorrow!”

The Duke turned from her. There was in the tone in which his wife spoke, the first indication that she had in the slightest degree ever betrayed of her suspicions of his own secret offence against her. He had found her, on his return from France, kind, but cold. The confidence of years seemed severed between them without a word. It was consistent with the goodness of Katharine Villiers’ nature never to allude to the offences which had sunk the most deeply in her heart, until she could avail herself of that plea to save others. The conduct of her husband in France; the publicity of that conduct, which had embittered the insult to her, had estranged her for a time. She had suffered deeply.

“I could fain forgive her,” said the Countess of Buckingham, taking upon herself to answer a

perplexing question ; “ but that she hath, I fear, by some arts, tampered with my son Purbeck’s health of body, and soundness of mind. He hath been distraught of late ; sore changed ; melancholic ; prone to fancies ; and he seeth visions by day and night.”

“ As well,” replied the Duchess, “ might an envious world aver, my Lady, that the husband whom thou didst espouse in thy second nuptials—to wit, good Sir Thomas—hath owed to any acts of sorcery of thine, his demented condition : and God knoweth how untruly would folk so reason touching the malady of which it hath pleased God only to release Sir Thomas by death.”

“ True, true,” returned the Countess, putting her handkerchief to her eyes by way of evading the argument.

At this moment, Lord Purbeck came into the room so abruptly, as to startle every one present. For days he had not spoken. He had become utterly indifferent to his personal attire : his collar was awry ; his cloak torn and dusty ; his vest was unbuttoned ; and nothing but his natural grace, and still surviving personal beauty, could have prevented his appearance from being disgusting.

His entrance struck his relatives dumb. They looked at each other mournfully. The silence was broken by Buckingham's going up to his brother, and putting his arm affectionately round his neck, with an expression of endearment.

The Countess of Buckingham rose also ; took the wasted hand of Lord Purbeck between her own, and carefully and calmly felt his pulse.

" It is well," she said ; " those nostrums in the, which my late spouse hath found much comfort, are now doing him bodily good. His pulses are well ; they do intermit somewhat, but are not so frequent as heretofore."

" Mother," cried the Duke, much affected by the wild and fixed stare of his brother's eyes, "*nothing* will heal his malady. It is here : " he placed his hand on his heart. " But here cometh Mistress Elizabeth—of late," and he smiled, as he said it kindly " my poor brother's shadow. Elizabeth, thou art pale—hast thou aught to say unto us ? "

" My Lord Duke, a messenger hath even now brought the tidings, that Sir Robert Howard is apprehended. Hath your Grace any orders concerning his detention ? I would not

that any one should interrupt your Grace's conference; therefore I brought in this message myself."

"Good; but thou tremblest, Mistress Elizabeth."

"Yes," and Elizabeth's tears fell fast, "in that the Lady Purbeck hath been these four years my friend: our girlish days have been passed in sweet counsel."

"And thou wouldst save her from this disgrace?"

"Of all that is alleged against her," exclaimed Elizabeth, "she is innocent."

Her open and honest countenance, and her firm confidence, staggered those who heard her. Women of purity of conduct have much in their power to save, or to condemn others. Her testimony was unanswerable. It was that of one whom all respected; it was that of a young and very beautiful woman who had risen above vanity, and had never found a dangerous gratification in the incense of flattery. The good word of one who had been a pure light in a haughty world, arrested for a short space, the doom of her unhappy friend.

The Duke turned gravely to her.

"Thou speakest positively, Elizabeth: make thy words good. Go to thy sometime companion and friend, whom I have seen, I will confess," and his voice faltered, "often blithesome with thee in youthful frolic. Alas! such times are over! Go to her—save her if thou may'st. Bid her take a solemn oath that she is clear from this imputed sin—let it be written, signed, sworn to;" the Duke raised his voice, "that she hath not dealt untruly by my brother, and I will believe, and enforce others to believe, in her innocence—so God help me."

"Yes—go," added the Countess-mother; "but have a care of my Lady Hatton; she is deceit itself. And if she question of our well-being, say that I, especially, am well and jocund."

"Elizabeth, bid Olive accompany thee; and lose no despatch," said the Duchess.

Elizabeth left them. As she closed the door, she saw that Lord Purbeck, exhausted, but still silent, had sunk on a chair; and that the Duke—the greatest sorrow of whose subsequent life was the unhappiness and untimely death of this brother—was supporting his head upon his shoulder.

Elizabeth hastened to find Olive: she was

in the nursery. The calmness of those precincts, and their abstraction from all the cares of the household, had often occurred to Elizabeth's mind in calmer moments than that in which she entered the spacious chamber, where the Rockers were plying their vocation.

Elizabeth could have lingered in that nursery.

Amidst her toys—rude and unseemly in those days—in the solitude of childhood in which the brothers and sisters are either much younger or much older—sat the Lady Mary. Surrounded by her dolls, the little creature seemed to assert her superiority of rank. She sat erect, and the dark wavy curls of her rich hair fell over as proud a little form as ever displayed itself at six years of age. Her face, small, round, symmetrical, dark, but clear in complexion, already exhibited the hereditary beauty of the house of Villiers. Her deep-set and very dark grey eyes, had something appealing and almost sad in their gaze. Her head had a listening, abstracted air. The joyousness of childhood was prematurely yielding to a thoughtful and apprehensive mind, quick to catch and to sympathize with the joys and troubles of those around her. Precocious darling of the house! she appeared to take

her little part in its cares, its interests. Not so, her brother George. The fair, well-formed heir of a title already impoverished, or at least encumbered, he had the "pleasant vacant countenance" of his father. His miniature vest of black velvet, simply adorned by a collar of fine lace; his silken hose; his velvet shoes, trimmed with huge cockades; his fair, long, curling hair; his white wrists, half concealed by cambric ruffles, made him as quaint, yet as pretty a little figure as could well be seen. He had the high, well-defined features of his father, with the clear blue eye, the fair, yet ever blushing complexion of the old and pure English race. There was a mirth in his laughter, a joyousness in every gesture, that was contrasted by the well-considered and sedate movements of Lady Mary Villiers.

The children joined their hands together, and encircled Elizabeth, as if to prevent her leaving them. "And why would she go? And whither? to whom? and when to return?"

"I go," said Elizabeth, looking at them, with a new feeling springing up in her heart, "to see a friend; but I shall speedily return here."



“Master Beaumont will not take thee away, then?” asked Mary, fixing her thoughtful eyes on the face of Elizabeth. “Olive said she thought he would soon.”

Elizabeth shook her head; but as she walked some moments afterwards with Olive, towards the hall, she thought of the hint thus dropped. It was not the only one that had fallen from those around her. She therefore said to her companion :

“Mistress Olive, shouldst thou hear idle tongues couple my name with that of Master Beaumont, reprove them.”

“At thy bidding,” was the good woman’s answer. “Yet would I fain say ay, rather than nay, when folks ask me when the espousals are to be.”

“What espousals? Why will idle tongues talk?” asked Elizabeth.

“When were they silent since the world began, Mistress Elizabeth? ’Twere vain to deny that the youth is melancholic, and well nigh distraught with jealousy of thy kinsman, Master Ralegh.”

“Of my kinsman!”

The words were spoken resentfully, but the

flush of surprise and pleasure was at variance with the tone.

“And the more,” continued the indomitable Olive, with a dark brow, and a reproving tone, “that *he* affecteth so much my Lady Ashley.”

“Olive,” replied Elizabeth, after a pause; “the fate of others is now my chiefest concern. Mine own, time must determine: no more of this, I pray thee.”

Olive, however, was unconquerable. They crossed one of the pleasant courts of York House. A gallery around it, a grass-plot beneath, and a bright sky above, made it, that day, a favourite lounge for the young gentlemen who composed the Duke of Buckingham’s household. Some were at bowls on the grass-plot; others fencing in the cloister around, beneath the gallery: all were merry and noisy. Olive found, however, a moment to say:

“’Twere better, Mistress Elizabeth, that thou didst have a care of thine own weal, than fret thy simple heart about one that doth not well merit thy zeal—to wit, my Lady Purbeck.”

Elizabeth could not hear her with patience.

"She is wholly innocent," she said, quickly.

"Maybe she is," returned Olive, with as condemning a face as if she had denied the assertion.

They reached the hall where serving men, in the rich livery of their lord, were waiting with sedan-chairs; and in a very short time they found themselves in the hall of Hatton House.

It was silent; and the porter of all the battalion of servants in that household alone was visible. On his face there was a portentous gloom. To the inquiries of Mistress Olive, he answered, that most of the servants had been summoned before "the commissioners," but that she would find Lady Purbeck in her chamber.

Elizabeth, terror-struck, rushed past him. Well acquainted with every part of that house, she hastened to the apartments usually occupied by her friend when she was at Hatton House. She knocked: there was no answer; but she opened the door.

The voice of railing, of bitter, cruel reproach, in Lady Hatton's loudest key—that voice which had often affrighted her in her youthful days—

struck not such a chill upon her frame, as the sight of Lady Purbeck, in the middle of the room, pale, dishevelled, tearless.

Lady Hatton was standing near a female servant, in whose arms a child lay, placidly sleeping. The attitude, the countenances of the mother and daughter told the tale. All had been discovered.

“Think not to taunt me, Madam”—Lady Hatton was thus speaking to her daughter—“for I can assure your Ladyship, that the Attorney-General—who hath the matter in hand—is resolved to deal roundly in this business.”

“Let him,” returned Frances, in an accent of despair, “let him. What can he do to me worse than you, Madam, have done? Can any one be harder to me in my misery than my mother?”

“Hold thy peace!” screamed Lady Hatton, almost frantic; “hold thy peace! ’Tis our honour that is lost in this sad game: honour and virtue demand satisfaction.”

“Honour! virtue!” said Lady Purbeck, contemptuously; “they were clean forgotten when

I was compelled—despite my contract—to wed the man I hate.”

“If thou talk thus, I shall know how to deal with thee,” was the maternal reply. “Thy child—never shalt thou see it more.”

Lady Purbeck turned paler even than before.

“Mother,” she exclaimed, very humbly, “I crave thy pardon!” She sank on her knees before Lady Hatton. “If thou hast ever had a mother’s heart, take not my child from me. If thou hast still any remains of a mother’s pity, leave me *him*. In the anguish of my loneliest hours I had that *one* solace. If I have borne my shame, and have not died, as I fain would, it has been for *him*. If I have one hope here, if I ever shall have one hope hereafter, it is in *him*. *He* will love me, when my parents have ceased to pity me.”

“A base-born bantling, in truth : a pretty solace!” cried Lady Hatton.

She looked not at her daughter as she spoke ; but Elizabeth had never ceased to watch, with the deepest emotion and sympathy, the varying countenance of Lady Purbeck. She now

perused carefully, so to speak, the expression which those words produced. They were heard in silence. The eyes of the erring young woman were upraised with a look full of bitter disappointment and of wounded feeling. Gradually that look changed into one of defiance, and settled into an expression of strong determination. Lady Hatton had forgotten that she whom she thus ground to the dust, was the daughter of Coke, and the granddaughter of Burleigh.

Lady Purbeck rose from her knees, and at this moment Sir Edward Coke entered the room.

He had been sent for from his country-seat. Yes, Lady Hatton had been thankful, in her humiliation, when she knew that the hand of Buckingham was ready to fall upon her and her daughter—she had been, indeed, thankful to summon her despised and unfashionable husband to her aid. She summoned him, however, much in the same mind as that in which a high-born lady would send for her attorney, and think it a great honour to *him* to offer his advice.

Sir Edward came in with a heavy step—a

heavier heart. What he had heard had not a good appearance, in his opinion. Women vent their unhappiness in words; men are usually speechless on such occasions. Sir Edward appeared wholly unable either to address a syllable, or to make the usual salutations, even to his Lady.

"I crave your pardon, Madam," he said at last. "Good-day to you, Mistress Elizabeth," he said, and sat down.

"And I, Sir," said Lady Purbeck, turning towards him, "am I not worthy of one word?"

"That may be, or may not be, at your own showing," replied Sir Edward, in a disconsolate manner. "Take that child hence!" he suddenly exclaimed, in a loud voice, to the nurse with the infant. The tone was such as had often resounded in Westminster Hall, making the very blood of the prisoner at the bar curdle; and those who knew Sir Edward well, would have expected it to be naturally followed by the epithets, "viper!" "child of hell!" "wretch!" and other mild expressions of his contempt.

But to his unhappy daughter, Coke had been habitually gentle; though, somewhat after the

fashion of a fierce dog, when it does not absolutely howl and bark. It was the absence of invective, rather than the display of kindness, that had excited the gratitude of his daughter ; for she was wholly unused to the gentle and steady affection which ordinarily marks the intercourse in our happier days between parent and child. She was, therefore, penetrated with the liveliest gratitude by the scantiest portion of forbearance and consideration from her father.

He looked at his daughter. There was an air of self-possession and of strong resolution about her, that instantly made the great lawyer resolve to make her "bite the dust." It was a result to which he was well accustomed. To affright, perplex, confound, humble, then trample upon a criminal, were he of the gentlest blood, the highest accomplishments, or the most courteous manners, were the means employed by counsel, and even by judges, in the times when Coke flourished, in order to arrive at truth, and to bring about what was termed justice.

Sir Edward was preparing his bitterest form of exhortation, even to his daughter, when Elizabeth stepped forward. Her intervention



was as that of a calm seraphic being in a company of demons. She came confidently towards her friend Lady Purbeck, full of the conviction that by one word she could be saved. The dignity of purity seemed to hallow every gesture. Lady Hatton was silent. Sir Edward suspended his intended address.

"By your leave, Madam," said Elizabeth to Lady Hatton, "I would fain speak unto Lady Purbeck."

"I am mighty content," replied Lady Hatton, "that you should say aught that you wish here; but I will none of your privy confabulations with Lady Purbeck."

"Nay, Madam, I did not so much as ask that," returned Elizabeth. "Aught that I have to say is open and direct."

"Speak out, Mistress Elizabeth," said Coke, growling, but bowingly respectfully.

"Frances," resumed Elizabeth, "before thy father, who hath ever cherished thee, I challenge thee to speak the truth. Thou knowest, perhaps," she added, whilst her eyes were fixed upon her friend with sincere pity and affection, "that Sir Robert Howard hath been arrested upon suspicion—"

"Which suspicion is strong and violent, Lady Purbeck," interrupted Coke, in a voice of fury.

Elizabeth continued :

"Nevertheless, his Grace the Duke of Buckingham, of his good will, doth empower me to put to thee—oh, Frances, hear me ! so that by one word thou mayst release one whom thou didst once regard, from durance—with one word, settle all angry quarrels. Restore thyself to thy good name."

"Impossible !" said Lady Hatton, taking advantage of a momentary pause : "*that* once assailed, a woman is never looked upon by decorous and godly folk." She drew herself up in all the odour of sanctity as she spoke. Her words grated upon the remaining unextinguished embers of pride and resentment in her daughter's heart.

Lady Purbeck averted her head from Elizabeth, and said :

"I will answer no questions *here*. Since his Grace hath thought it meet to incarcerate Sir Robert Howard, he may incarcerate me also. I meet with few regards *here*," she

added, looking around her. "I shall have a new lodging, and new keepers."

"Vastly well, Lady Purbeck, vastly well!" cried Sir Edward Coke; "then, let the law take its due course: testimony of witnesses will doubtless be obtained, and, perchance, a confession from parties concerned. Lady Hatton, I am at your service."

"Frances!" cried Elizabeth, "Frances! wilt thou not say one word? Wilt thou not—*canst* thou not—say, 'I am innocent'?"

"Mistress Elizabeth, you waste breath on one so contumacious," interposed Lady Hatton, crafty as Satan, and not desirous of drawing from her daughter the confession which she dreaded.

"This proceeding on his Grace's part is altogether irregular, Madam," said Coke: "let justice be done in the face of the world. Go to, Lady Purbeck—to your chamber, Madam, until 'tis my pleasure to release you."

Lady Purbeck looked at him once: the eyes of the father and daughter met.

"See, Madam, that no one have access to

her," added Coke; and Lady Hatton led the way to her daughter's apartments.

They went out: the door closed. Then the sounds of loud wailing and weeping were heard from within.

"My father!—my father!"

"For God's sake, comfort her, Sir!" cried Elizabeth, who was left in the chamber alone with Sir Edward Coke; "for pity's sake, call her back—forgive her!"

"Never!" replied the unhappy man, in a broken and disconsolate voice; "never, Mistress Elizabeth, never—*never*!" he reiterated. He stamped his foot. "Let her go hence!—now, and for aye! Why should I see her again? Marked'st thou not, Mistress Elizabeth, that she hath not responded to thy question? No! she hath dishonoured me—that is plain! I have sons," resumed the heart-broken father, "who would gladly avenge her disgrace: but what of that? Can they bring back my child to me?—can they bring Frances to me? No! Howard's paramour shall never cross my threshold! The Duke need not be let nor hindered of his revenge—she is none of mine now!"

He clasped his hands over his brow.

"Where am I? This chamber seemeth to turn round! I am ill, Mistress Elizabeth; call not my serving-men."

He reeled against the wall; Elizabeth supported him to a chair. She took up a little hand-bell near her, and was on the point of ringing for aid.

"No, no!" said the old man, in his deep, low, solemn tones; "I am not much amiss, and they are here fine folk. I will go home—home to my chambers, where—God help me!"

Perhaps it was the thought of the desolate, dreary hours of thought that were to be encountered there. Elizabeth entreated that she might send for his sons.

"No, no," he answered mildly, but positively; "I humbly thank you, Mistress Elizabeth. No; they have their mother's heart. No, I thank you; I shall go home."

He walked away, alone: people saw him cross the court of Hatton House, feebly; but none ran out to help him, any more than they would have offered their services to the meanest tradesman. Others remarked him, tottering

along Holborn, and crossing into that passage called Great Turnstile; and so he buried himself in his chambers, amongst his books.

The father and daughter met no more !

## CHAPTER XIV.

## ELIZABETH AND HER COUSIN.

THE Queen had dancing in Somerset House that evening. The fashionable society of the metropolis being then limited to a very moderate number of the choice nobility, all that occurred in that sphere was as much the subject of comment as it would be now in a country town, or in the state of society—next to that the most virulent—an English colony in a continental city.

Elizabeth was constrained to attend the Duchess to Somerset House. She regretted it not ; because, finding all hopes of appeasing her patron, the Duke, fruitless, she intended to try the influence of others upon the all-

powerful favourite, in order to induce him to relax the prosecution against Sir Robert Howard, and to strive to reconcile Lady Purbeck with her parents.

"How little," she thought, as she stood behind the Duchess, looking at the dancing, "is she missed, who was once the fairest here!"

"A groat for your inmost thoughts, Mistress Elizabeth," said Endymion Porter, who was on duty near the Duke.

"Ah! Master Porter! Thou knowest them, I reckon. They concern the weal of one whom we have oftentimes seen amid this gay assembly of her compeers—Lady Purbeck!"

"Ahem! And here she might be even now—were she worthy."

"I know not," answered Elizabeth, sadly, "whether thou sayst truly; but this I know, that I would the Duke were lenient."

"His Grace, Mistress Elizabeth, is always in the right; so, at least, I conceit, who am only worthy to reverence and to obey. I have no hope of any compromise, far less of any reconciliation. But wouldst thou sue to his Grace, do it by the aid of thy kinsman, Raleigh. He's



the rising star, believe me. I would I could assuage thy uneasiness ; but *I* can do nought. Master Raleigh is all-powerful ; the why and wherefore I may tell thee. His suit is accepted by Lady Ashley—that I *know*. Lady Ashley hath much favour with the Lady Carlisle. The Lady Carlisle, again, hath sovereign sway with the Queen of France—Queen of Hearts, as they call her. And thinkest thou that the Duke will slight aught that can advance him in her good will and royal apprehension ? Thou art pensive, sweet Mistress Elizabeth. By the stars ! I see not at this moment a finer form nor more beauteous face than thine. I proffer thee my adorations.”

“ They are ill-timed, Sir,” replied Elizabeth, moving from him.

She sat down far apart from the dancers. Never do their personal gifts appear more worthless in the eyes of women than when they know that beauty, goodness, affection, cannot stand up against money. Elizabeth could not have believed in the morning, that an hour should elapse that evening during which she could forget all except her own secret vexations.

They had been poignantly revived since her last interview with Raleigh at Calais. They were embittered by the conviction that in that interview she had forgotten her self-respect, and lowered herself in his opinion. His conduct had proved it. A more sedulous avoidance—greater estrangement had ensued upon their first and subsequent meetings when she returned to England. Yet she could not but see that, whilst he rarely spoke to her, he watched her narrowly; that he was jealous of her attentions to others, and of the attentions which others paid to her. Often, whilst at the Court, or in the assemblies of the great—for in private she never saw him—she met his fixed and serious, even melancholy look. Once or twice she had ventured to ask him after his health—the answers were kind; but ere she could again speak to him he was gone.

Then she observed him follow assiduously, though never obsequiously, in the “wake of fortune.” She saw him—him who was once so proud—employ his talents to amuse the great, and the great only. The man marked out and stricken by misfortune was rarely seen.

Among the humble, he seemed to have forgotten that he once belonged to the dismal company of the well-born poor. Necessity and he had parted company: rank, wealth, and power were his associates. It has been often remarked, that those who are born to greatness wear it far more easily than those who "achieve greatness." The sudden elevation of Carew Raleigh, after long depression, had changed him. He was not arrogant, but he was absorbed. He saw clearly—or thought he saw—that the rumour of his approaching marriage, and the influence of his affianced wife and of her family, were paving the way for his restoration in blood. This was an object, ever dearest not only to his heart, but also most commonly and enthusiastically cherished by all those whose ancestors had been attainted. Raleigh had sacrificed for this his affections: he now could not retreat.

Elizabeth could have supported his avoidance with fewer pangs, had she not remembered that in an unguarded moment he had read her heart. The wounds of pride added their sharp pains to those of a long-cherished attachment which became every day more certain of disap-

pointment. That she suffered much was attested by her abstraction; and that which grows upon the gentlest natures under the pressure of unconquerable sorrow—irritability with the world.

As she strove to listen to the various compliments proffered to her in an age of compliments, she was addressed by Francis Beaumont :

“I am commanded,” he said, “by his Grace, my kinsman, to lead you to the dance. But do not,” he added, with a look of some vexation, “do not comply if you would prefer to refuse.”

“And wherefore should I refuse?” asked Elizabeth, smiling; and rising, she gave him her hand.

“Perchance, so blithesome an exercise may divert melancholy,” said Beaumont, as he stood near her.

“Dost thou mean in *thy* mind, or in mine?”

“I am rarely sad, Mistress Elizabeth, except when I see others appear so melancholy.”

“Thou wilt allow, Master Beaumont, I have cause enough to make me sad—mine own true

friend disgraced unjustly. O, canst thou not appeal unto his Grace in her behalf?"

"I would urgently, though I might not effectually," said Beaumont, "could I trust in *her* truth. But not even for the sake of one whom I would die to please, can I plead for the woman who has forgotten what is due to her own honour."

They were here interrupted by the movements of the dance, as they returned to their places.

Beaumont said:

"His Grace's commands have been laid upon me to-night to sue for your hand, Mistress Elizabeth, in the dance: they are also enforced to—to—"

"What wouldst thou say?"

"To ask thee to meet me in the wilderness of York House to-morrow at noon. I give thee ample notice, Mistress Elizabeth, that thou mayst refuse at thy pleasure."

The quivering lip, the anxious tone, and reddening cheek, disclosed to Elizabeth the true meaning of these few words. She felt heart-sick; she knew the Duke's impetuous nature, and she saw her fate in this sudden arrangement. Instances were not rare of

certain dependents of the great Duke being commanded to form marriages when both parties were averse—under pain of his powerful displeasure. In this instance, Elizabeth well knew that only one of the parties concerned would be opposed to the Duke's wishes.

At that very moment she observed Raleigh with much interest watching her: she met his eyes; there was an expression of acute pain in them. He suddenly left the room; and Elizabeth, with as much composure as she could muster, turned to speak to Beaumont.

"I dare not gainsay the Duke's pleasure, Master Beaumont. I leave it to the nicety of thy discretion to avail thyself of the interview," she said, in a low tone, "if thou wilt."

"Then I must deny myself my *last* hope," replied Beaumont, in much emotion. "I see that thou wouldst not that I should pursue this matter."

He appeared so deeply wounded, he spoke with so bitter an expression of mortified feelings, that Elizabeth could not help saying:

"If it will be any solace to thee, Master

Beaumont, to meet me to-morrow, let it be so. I will be at the Wilderness at noon. We have been so long companions—perforce, maybe—but yet kindly disposed, that should it be thy wish to discourse with me—’twere shame in me to refuse such conference.”

“For five minutes only; and then I will never trouble you more, Mistress Elizabeth.”

They separated. As Elizabeth was that evening following her patroness to her coach, a voice near her whispered :

“Elizabeth, I wish thee joy! Thy suitor is on the road to fortune, and hath achieved favour. Thou hast chosen well the man so blessed and prosperous—thou hast well eschewed and discarded poverty and disfavour.”

“Eschewed—discarded?” returned Elizabeth, bitterly. “Thou knowest full well, that to me is neither the power to eschew, nor the free will to discard.”

“Then thou wilt accept him?” said Carew, looking at her almost resentfully; yet, still the yearnings of attachment were discernible in his manner.

Elizabeth had never as yet made any allusion to the reported marriage of her cousin. It was

scarcely even then that she could bring her mind to believe that the rumours were true. But she then permitted herself to say :

“The kinsman who ever maintaineth a silence about his own felicity, hath little right to proffer even his good will to another in such a case. And yet,” struck by the varying expression of a face, every change in which was so familiar to her ; “and yet—*thou* hast my good will, Carew. Farewell !”

She hastened from him ; but he overtook her. The unconscious crowd gave them that opportunity which, to those denied the privilege of meeting in private, is often so invaluable.

“Thou wilt forgive,” Carew whispered to his cousin, “if ever I have given thee even a moment’s pain. When we were more than friends, and—thou wilt *forget* ?”

“I do forgive,” said Elizabeth, with a sinking heart, but striving to be kind : her nature was so generous and tender.

“And thou wilt *forget* ? Remember,” added Carew, after a pause, “that ’tis not the constancy that faileth ; ’tis the world’s laws that impose—”



He spoke in real emotion, yet Elizabeth felt his words almost an insult. She would have hurried on, but she could not. Her feelings vibrated between the workings of indignation and the gentler impulses of sorrow and pity.

"And thou wilt forget?" Carew repeated to her. "Thou *canst* forget?"

"Why urge that idle—nay more, that cruel question," replied Elizabeth, a bright colour tinging her cheeks. "We were not for each other—that is all!"

Happily the Duchess at this moment stepped into the court of Somerset House. A gorgeous coach, with the ever memorable and offensive six horses with out-riders, flambeaux, and a small guard of honour, yawned to receive her Grace. The harvest-moon, which seems to bring into the metropolis its tale of pleasant and fertile vales in the far country, brightened by her pure beams, shone into the court. Elizabeth felt that some hand, trembling like her own, was stretched out to help her to ascend the steps of the high and cumbersome equipage. She looked not back: she was calm. All now was over. The coach

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drove into the court-yard of York House; and there the Duke and Duchess were instantly greeted by a messenger from the city.

“ May I crave an interview with your Grace to-night ?” said a young man, whose black dress betokened him to belong to a learned profession, but who was, nevertheless, waiting humbly near the door.

“ Speak out at once,” said Buckingham, with his accustomed impatience, “ I have no foes here—in so far as I can tell,” he added, somewhat bitterly. “ These are my own varlets, not strangers.”

The Duke walked rapidly into an inner room, whilst the Duchess, followed by Elizabeth, proceeded to the sleeping apartments. Ere they had walked down the long corridor they were, however, sent for by the Duke.

They found him walking in much perturbation up and down the room wherein he was accustomed to receive suitors and transact business. Estranged as the Duchess had been of late from him, he highly valued her opinion in every exigency, and she was far too generous to withhold aid, and even sympathy when required.

“ What next ?” exclaimed the Duke, as they

entered. "This learned gentleman," pointing to the lawyer, who stood meekly apart, "bringeth me tidings that we have caught and caged Sir Robert Howard safely in the Fleet. That is well. But he affirmeth that our sister-in-law doth insist that she shall follow her paramour to the prison, there to herd with the vilest sort, and to become more vile. What's to be done?"

The Duchess shook her head.

"Poor child!" she said, "she hath been dealt hardly with, and is desperate."

"'Twill be bruited all over the country," resumed the Duke, "that we—to wit, I and Purbeck—have driven her to it. Now my Lady Purbeck," he spoke in a lower tone, so that the lawyer might not hear, "is allied to half of our greatest nobles."

"An please your Grace," said the lawyer, coming forwards, "we were instructed to deal roundly with the delinquents."

"Tush! Master Lawyer. I blame thee and thine not; but I seek counsel. What's to be done? A sister of ours," said the Duke, looking at his wife, "in the Fleet? 'Tis an everlasting disgrace to our family."

“ Still more the imputed cause,” observed the Duchess, mildly : “ yet now, indeed, I comprehend that Lady Purbeck hath not conducted herself seemly, in that she will incarcerate herself with Howard.”

“ Go to her, Katherine,” said the Duke, after a silence and deep thought, “ thou hast ever dealt graciously with her—as thou dost with all,” he added, in a low tone, touched by the kindly bearing of the pure to the impure ; the charity of a virtuous woman to the guilty.

The Duchess would have been won over by the tone, the now rare and unfamiliar appellation, had not she ever been foremost to mediate, to heal differences, or—what was even more hard—to reconcile the quarrels of others. To forbear herself, was the constant occupation of her life, for she was by marriage a member of a large, high-spirited, though affectionate family, full of pride and of imprudence.

“ I will go at once,” she answered. “ Order my coach : ’tis indeed late, but my Lady Hatton hath not yet left Somerset House. We shall be there, if my grooms use despatch, ere she return.”

“ God wot you will !” exclaimed the Duke,

"I would fain encounter a legion of devils, than that old woman's infernal spirit."

"My Lord Duke," observed the lawyer, coming forward out of his retirement. "That same Lady Hatton hath put down the Solicitor-general himself, and driven the Attorney-general out of her very presence!"

"As a turkey-cock doth a brood of geese, I'll be bound," replied Buckingham.

"And as for the late Lord Chief Justice! He's a very craven before her Ladyship."

"'Tis a question with me, ever," resumed the Duke, "which of the twain is the evil-tongued'st—his late Lordship's the honestest."

"And hath some touch of mercy in him," interposed the lawyer.

"What demon it was that brought such a pair together, I know not!" resumed the Duke.

"Lust of wealth and lust of power, I conceit, my Lord Duke," answered the lawyer, with a sly look at Buckingham himself.

"Well, I think we had best close this discourse concerning this virtuous and loving couple for to-night," said the Duke. "God grant they may not tear each other to pieces, as

the beasts at Exeter Change would, were they uncaged."

"Her Ladyship will keep her hands off, as she well knowest her help-mate hath one foot in the grave, my Lord Duke."

"And between them their daughter will go to destruction," interrupted the Duchess "Come, Elizabeth, let us not dally here a moment longer."

## CHAPTER XV.

## LADY PURBECK.

THE interior of Hatton House was silent, and its vast hall, its wide staircases and vestibules struck chilly upon the two ladies who sought and gained admittance within it. For Lady Hatton had remained at Somerset House, though it was now near midnight. The sole recreation which she allowed herself was that of high play: it was the leading vice—if any vice could be called leading where all were so conspicuous of the late King's Court. Anne of Denmark had delighted in cards; and gambling took its place in women when gallantry ceased. In *good* Queen Anne of Denmark's time, joviality—not to say inebriety

— finished the characteristics of ladies of fashion.

Lady Hatton had always prided herself upon her virtue. Her fame was unsullied; and she was, therefore, privileged to build her reputation upon the absence of one failing, and to cherish a legion of other defects.

She was, therefore, deep in basset when the Duchess went to entreat that her sister-in-law would, even at that late hour, receive her.

“What, not a-bed, dear sister,” exclaimed the kind-hearted Duchess of Buckingham, as she entered the sleeping-room of Lady Purbeck.

Lady Purbeck was on her knees before a small coffer of papers, which she was employed in packing up. She looked round, and said :

“Pardon my not rising to receive your Grace. I must needs despatch. I have no time to lose, for my mother will be returned soon.”

“And will she not find you here?” asked the Duchess. “Or are these preparations—” she looked around her as she spoke at various packets and boxes prepared for travelling—“are these the signals of escape?”



"They are, Madam. I do not call your Grace sister, for I have now forfeited every tie—save one. Elizabeth!" cried Lady Purbeck, "do not look at me thus sternly: thou hast never known my lot; thou hast not been insulted, trampled on, watched, betrayed, cursed. What have I to keep me here? I have no mother now. She has sent my child from me; and, though I prayed for but one adieu—one last look—well! well! I said I would not weep. No, no! my mother shall not force one tear from my eyes."

She resumed her occupation; and the Duchess seemed perplexed and hesitating how to address her.

"Then what, Lady Purbeck," she said at length, "are your purposes?"

"To share *his* doom, whom your Lord hath buried, perchance, for ever, in the wretched prison of this city. Think you, that he will *ever* be set free? I know my Lord of Buckingham better. Our fault is mutual—mutual: therefore, it is meet that our punishment should be. No, Howard—no—thou hast suffered for me. I will bear the burden of thy sorrows;

and, if I die of hardship, what boots it? My mother hath sent away my child—what boots it?”

“But, Lady Purbeck—or Hatton, still let me call thee sister in a day or twain. Sir Robert will be set free. Let him but justify his honour.”

“And to whom? Are they men of honour that shall hear him? Is justice, the veriest shadow of justice, meted out in these days? Do not the oppressed people of these lands know well—ay, full well—the justice that is meted to Buckingham’s foes? Justice! He hath no gold to buy that which thou mayst call justice! Madam, you have been ever kind unto me, or I would presage to you that the day of justice *will* come; but it will be justice on him on whom all England crieth shame—justice on the powerful, all powerful, but hated family of Villiers.”

“This is too much,” replied the Duchess, turning pale. “I came hither to save—to succour thee—and I cannot—”

“If thou wilt save *me*, save him,” returned Frances. “Oh! I cannot bear that his days should for ever pass in a prison, where he will

be left. I read his destiny ! Let us go hence ! I am willing, Madam, to remove from you all the stain which you bear as my kindred. Let us go ; and then my name, and perchance my faults, may be forgotten on earth."

"Thou weepest, Frances," said Elizabeth taking her hand—she thought to seize that moment of gentleness to urge her throwing herself into the protection of the Duchess.

But it was too late. A voice that made even the Duchess start and tremble, was heard in the hall. It was one of those voices which scarcely seems to be human, when fury once excites its tone ; loud, high-pitched, searching and filling every quiet hole and corner of the Hall. Well could those who heard it conceive the accompanying look and gestures, which suited the action to the word."

"I must needs withdraw," said the Duchess, trembling. "I cannot face my Lady Hatton when she is ruffled."

"Albeit," observed Frances, "I, who have never had from her gentler words than those thou now hearest—I am, in thy sight, a wretch, in that I have at last, cast off that yoke."

"A woman taketh on herself a harder yoke still, when she loseth her own, her precious self-esteem," replied the Duchess, mildly; but coldly turning from her.

"Stay," cried Elizabeth; "do not leave her. Frances, by the love we once had together, hear me. Wilt thou not place thyself in worthier protection than this, or than that which thou dost wickedly threaten? Wilt thou not let the Duchess take thee hence? reconcile thee to thy unhappy husband, ere thou hast indeed dishonoured him? And then, thy child—" she stopped, in extreme emotion.

"Elizabeth," replied Frances, partially rising, and looking at her, "*It is too late.*"

"Oh, Frances, Frances," cried Elizabeth, "tell me not that thou art lost! Few have been my friends—thou—of those few thou wert ever dearest to my heart—say it not—say it not—I cannot bear it."

Lady Purbeck looked at her silently. The deepest remorse that she had hitherto felt, came at that moment into her heart; no arguments, no reproach, could have stung her like that true and poignant sorrow. The influence of our contemporaries in life, is almost always the

strongest that can be exercised over our minds : we yield to it from our earliest moments, in the nursery, in the play-ground, instinctively and unconsciously. To parental sway we, on the other hand, instinctively oppose ourselves : it holds not out that strong allurements of imitation.

Lady Purbeck had always entertained a sincere respect for Elizabeth Throckmorton. The difference of their fortunes had tended to secure the bond. Frances was generous and perfectly careless of the gifts of fortune, and she was disposed to encourage rather than to envy the tributes paid to one as beautiful as herself, but far less favoured, as it appeared, by destiny. It was this generous and somewhat great nature that had, on the other hand, attached Elizabeth to Lady Purbeck. Often had they passed together weeks in the lordly seclusion of New Hall, when hope was nigh, and the future full of promise. Scarcely more than children, they had the simplicity of children, which grew, as they grew into the dawning characteristics of womanhood.

The passionate grief of her friend arrested, therefore, the obstinate purpose of Lady Pur-

beck. She arose, and looked steadfastly at Elizabeth.

A singular expression of shame, doubt, remorse, was apparent in her countenance. The Duchess saw the moment of hesitation. It was also, she rightly judged, the moment of hope. Too wise to disturb the workings of the awakened mind, she was silent. All without, all in the hall below, in the corridor, was silent also. Lady Hatton had, she hoped, retired to her chamber. There was a pause of breathless expectation. Would she yield—or not?

At that instant Lady Hatton's step—ominous as her voice—heavy, imperative—stamping, rather than treading, on the floor, was heard along the ante-chamber; and the Duchess said to herself, “all is lost!”

Lady Purbeck caught a glance of her mother's figure: her doom was sealed.

“No, Elizabeth,” she said, quickly, “I will *not* go unto York House. I shall be given back to *her*.”

A night of unsuccessful play had not tempered the spirit of Lady Hatton. She came in like a whirlwind, but reined in the torrent

of her abuse, when she saw the Duchess of Buckingham. Civil sneers, and the process of talking at those present, were the mild forms of her insolence which she now employed.

“By my troth, your Grace honours my poor house amazingly, to come so late—or rather, I should say, so early. Any news? Any especial business? Or is it merely the unwonted compliment of a visit?”

“I came, Lady Hatton,” replied the Duchess, with a grave dignity, “to persuade Lady Purbeck to place herself under that protection that best becometh her present unhappiness.”

“As how? That of his Grace—the Duke?” interrupted Lady Hatton.

“Yes, Madam; that of her husband’s kinsfolk.”

“I thank your Grace most humbly—infinately—down to the dust. I would I could assure your Grace of my unbounded gratitude. My debt is great; but my daughter goeth not from this house. Her father’s care and mine I hold to be as good as that of my Lord Duke’s, inasmuch as we have and hold her fortune. I make no doubt my Lord Duke would take good care of the same—nay, that

it would not, at this present time be displeasing to his Grace that my daughter's dower should go to aid his Grace's coffers. Your Grace is too kind. Go to, Frances; go to bed child. Some folks are mighty kind to come late o'nights; but for my part, I never make nor meddle; and I think it best for heads of families to deal with their own affairs as they best know how."

The Duchess looked at the unworthy daughter of Cecil as she spoke; and even her fair and mild countenance was reddened for an instant with resentment. But it was one attribute of Katharine Villiers, that she rarely forgot the dignity of gentleness, that dignity so effective, so infinitely more powerful than passionate words. But the taunt drew from her forbearing nature more than had perhaps ever before been drawn from the Duchess. It produced a stern and just, though calm reply:

"Were my sister-in-law in the custody of her honourable and prudent father, Madam; were he here to protect and counsel her, those who, next to your Ladyship, have the next



best interest in her weal, might feel assured all would be well."

"Then your Grace meaneth that I, the most tender and loving mother that ever bore a child, am *not* her fittest, her discretest, her most natural guardian?" returned Lady Hatton, somewhat less tempestuously than might have been expected.

"Your Ladyship hath, in that respect, most clearly expressed my meaning," replied the Duchess. "And," she added, with a lofty composure that daunted her antagonist, "I will intrude myself no longer on your Ladyship's privacy. I beg," she added, curtsying low, "my service to your Ladyship."

She withdrew. Lady Hatton followed her into the ante-chamber.

"And pray, what course may your Grace think fit?" she inquired, intimidated by the ominous calmness, which was far more alarming than words; "what course will my Lord Duke pursue?"

The Duchess was receiving her mantle at that moment from the trembling hands of Elizabeth.

"Madam," she replied, "the business is beyond our poor skill to deal with. It is too complicated, and must be left now to men of wisdom and experience in such affairs."

She turned away; and in a few minutes the Duchess's coach had quitted the court of Hatton House, never again to enter those precincts. The alliance, formed for gain, was henceforth converted into hostility. Long-smothered hate was henceforth to have its vent. The banqueting hall of Hatton House, which had so often been graced by the presence of the proud and handsome Villiers' family, should receive them there no more.

"Elizabeth," said the Duchess, as she drove towards York House, "wherefore this passion of tears? We have done our best to save her."

But the bonds which restrained the humble dependant from abandoning herself to nature's language in the presence of her superior, were loosed. True and deep grief is no respecter of distinctions.

Elizabeth's unrestrained emotion touched, but it also vexed the Duchess. It seemed a

kind of reproach to the injured, insulted family of Villiers.

“Elizabeth,” at last the Duchess resumed, “thou canst now do nought in this matter. I have noted that, of late, there hath been a heaviness on thy spirits. Perchance thou hast too young known life’s cares ; perchance ours sadden thee over much. My gentle friend, thou dost, indeed, solace me ever ; and thy counsels are grateful to me, for they come from a true and loving heart. Nevertheless, I would spare thee for a short space, if thou wish it ; and thou couldst visit thy aunt, Lady Raleigh, in her seclusion at Tenchley—”

“I would not willingly quit your Grace at this season,” said Elizabeth ; “but—”

“But thou wouldst fain go ? Thou wouldst, and thou wouldst not ? Thy will, and thy love to me do contest the matter.”

“Could I serve Lady Purbeck, also,” interposed Elizabeth.

“’Twere impossible. Henceforth, I forbid all communion,” replied the Duchess. “Thou seest what interpretation,” she added, indignantly, “hath been placed on our vain efforts to

control that wilful, hapless girl. We shall abase our honour by any fresh attempt. No. The law must now settle what privy councils have failed to do."

They reached York House. As they entered the hall, the Duchess was alarmed at the pale, even haggard, countenance of Elizabeth. She might have remarked before, that it had long since lost its hue of health—that the features, once so perfect, had gained sharpness in lieu of delicacy; but the great, too little accustomed to think of others, are often blind to the silent sufferers who have their own bitterness of heart to combat with, whilst in the round of ceremonial duties.

"How strangely she is changed!" thought the kind favourite of fortune of her poor dependant. "I must speak, to-morrow, with Olive about this matter."

Harassed as she was, and occupied during the greater part of that night in consultations with her infuriated husband upon the steps necessary to be taken in order to vindicate Lord Purbeck's honour, and to release him from a bond of disgrace, the Duchess did not fail to remember in the morning Elizabeth's uncon-

trollable distress of mind : her altered appearance showed how unfit she would be to encounter the various scenes of dispute, or to witness the measures of harshness which must now ensue. The Duchess was aware that all the strength, hatred, influence of the house of Villiers would be employed to master the influence of Lady Hatton. The scabbard was thrown aside—war was proclaimed.

“ I would thou shouldst appoint some one or two of our trustiest servants,” the Duchess said to Olive, after giving her various other injunctions, “ to carry Mistress Elizabeth Throckmorton with all speed and safety to Tenchley. The roads are now passable in that country, methinks, and the full moon cometh to-night ; and in two days, I conceit, she might, with fair horsemanship, reach the place ; and I fear, should she not speedily depart, she will be sick—a miliary fever, maybe.”

“ She hath no symptoms of a miliary fever, an it please your Grace,” said Olive.

“ Or vapours ?” asked the Duchess.

“ Vapours, more like,” returned Olive, mysteriously.

The Duchess looked up at her.

"Thou ever speakest darkly, Olive. What *hath* she?"

"Your Grace might properly inquire of Sir Theodore," answered Olive; "for her passion of tears yesternight being such that I could not with certain cordials of my own composing allay them, I did send for the learned doctor."

"I will question him anon," said the Duchess, "when my spirit is less heavy—if ever! How *hath* Lord Purbeck slept the night?"

"Mighty unquiet, Madam," replied Olive, with a face calculated to crush hope for ever.

"Something must be done for his Lordship, but what, I know not," said the Duchess, putting her hand to her head.

"No learned doctor can heal *his* malady, an it please your Grace," said Olive, with a face of inflexible woe, as she left the Duchess sitting and musing over all these difficulties and disasters.

## CHAPTER XVI.

## A COUNTRY SCENE.

THE village of Limpsfield is one of those exquisite home scenes of which Kent affords so many specimens. The way to it lies, on every side, through pleasant paths. Here, in the nineteenth century, stretches a green park, over which umbrageous trees cast a flickering shadow. The deer herd beneath the trees, they are the accompaniments of wealth. Beyond rises a fair house, the precincts of which, sedulously cared for, attests the residence of the rich owner of the land. Descending into the vale in which Limpsfield stands, you pass through the glade ; and be assured, as you gaze around you, that the poor are well cared for. Their pastor, who

lives in a goodly house close to the comely and ancient church, is adequately supported in his holy sphere. A handful of neat and goodly cottages, interspersed with that middle class of dwellings which offer so much comfort in England, present the comfortable notion of humility rather than of poverty. You grant that it is right such gentle-featured inequality should exist: that the poor should not cease out of the land:—it is a gracious reflection for the rich.

But formerly Limpsfield, now so surpassingly lovely and cheerful, was a poor hamlet, nestling between two expansive commons, and boasting no feature of importance except its church. The ancestors of the rich landowners of Kent who now shed a bounteous influence over their county, were then mostly good citizens, dwelling amid their storehouses, or trading on the seas, or seeking reputation in warfare, or lending money, or waiting on courtiers, or, perhaps, cultivating as yeomen the rich soil of the fertile districts wherein the hop has been, from the time of Henry VIII., the staple of the land. Such as many continental villages are now, was Limpsfield. There was not a single family in



it above the rank of a labourer, except, indeed, the parish clergyman, who was just able to exist. There was not even a school—that invariable appendage to a church abroad.

I suppose it would be difficult to conceive the distress, disease, and helpless despondency that pervaded England long after the dissolution of the monasteries. Those institutions, deleterious in all times, are only to be palliated in the remotest ages, when they formed a sanctuary for those arts which might have perished otherwise. These institutions had begotten a false system of beggarly dependence among the poor. The monks were certainly the benefactors of their neighbourhood ; but subsisting upon alms, in the first instance, themselves, they did not consult the best interests of the poor, in rendering them their servile and often idle dependants. It was long after they were—wisely, indeed, but in the method, violently and rapaciously—suppressed, before the rural poor could rally from their supineness and despondency ; and were the system ever again carried out in England, again would the same results, only more partially, be produced.

The seclusion of Tenchley had produced one

of its best effects on the character of Lady Raleigh. Her former life had been passed in turmoil. Her husband's changing fortunes, his projects, his expeditions, his discoveries, his heavy losses, and the acts of injustice which pursued him, had absorbed her mind. In his prison she had shared in his avocations ; but while the sword of doom was hanging over him, she had had little sympathy to give away to others. Misfortune seems to make some of us selfish—it makes us, perhaps, only forgetful.

In the calm of her chosen retreat, Lady Raleigh learned to love her kind. She had now made up her mind to live and die at Tenchley. The place in which you anticipate that you will draw your last breath, take your last look of nature, leave your memory behind you, has a peculiar claim on your affections. Every action of your day will be registered in the mind of some one. Every plant you train against your door will blossom, when the hand that raised it shall be powerless. Example—that mighty instrument—is all concentrated in that narrow sphere. The poorest neighbour finds conse-

quence in your eyes, for his annals run along the course of time with yours.

Lady Raleigh's outward life had, in its decline, the saintliness and calm which belong so well to those who withdraw from society. For, to be haunted in our retreat by small passions and by paltry irritations, destroys the dignity of retirement. To attend to the wants of the poor at Limpsfield, as much as the poor could aid others still poorer; to cultivate their confidence; to point out to the young the path of peace and security; to solace the departing, and to bring *all* home to her own heart, in preparation for that change which might come soon, or might be retarded until late in the winter of life—these were her offices.

And yet, the world still, in one great particular, claimed her for its own. For her son she had never relinquished ambition; nor was that ambition of the lofty kind which might seem consistent with Lady Raleigh's external life. Wise is the prayer proffered against our "secret sins;" for we cannot ourselves know, nor number them.

Lady Raleigh had hailed the anticipated mar-

riage of her son as the dawn of that prosperity which had this one point in view—the reversal of the attainder. She had approved and sanctioned the match. Not yet wholly unspotted by the world; when told, by the few friends who still sent her tidings of the great and busy world, that there *were* shadows on the character of Lady Ashley, she had pardoned in the rich and lavish widow what she could not have forgiven in the poor inmate of one of the cottages at Limpsfield.

Lady Raleigh was in this state of exultation when a letter reached her, announcing the intended return of her niece to her roof, upon the plea of impaired health. It did not occur to Lady Raleigh to connect the illness with the approaching marriage of her son. She had almost forgotten the existence of that early attachment, which had been cherished by the young, whilst by the old it was deemed a passing folly. It was, naturally, a point of delicacy with Elizabeth to hide from her aunt the affection which had been kindly, but unflinchingly, condemned the instant that it had been disclosed. Lady Raleigh had even been less relenting on that occasion than her husband.

She had, as Carew then thought, cruelly, but, in later life, wisely, added the weight of her influence to Sir Walter Raleigh's objections on that head. She had given out her opinion to the weeping, but acquiescent Elizabeth, with maternal expressions; and then, with a forbearance and a sternness that few mothers could assume, had left her to herself. The pale cheek, that had never since wholly recovered its early bloom, was unnoticed. The love of solitude, the indifference to habitual pursuits—which, under the guidance of the master-mind which embraced all things, from the movement of a star, to the working of an embroidery-needle, had flourished in the prison-home—these indications of an early disappointment were seen, and not seen, by Lady Raleigh. She had had no daughters. She did not know the sickening care of the mother who sees her child pine, and cannot aid her!—who knows her child to merit every gift of fortune, or blessing of affection, yet finds that they must be withheld! She knew not the mother's restlessness—the tender anxiety, that far exceeds what that mother believes herself to have ever felt in those days

when her own fate hung upon the will of others.

But Sir Walter Raleigh had had a clearer perception of the truth: he had seen, and sorrowed. Strange was it, that Elizabeth had even less feared her uncle than Lady Raleigh!—perhaps she had even loved him more. There was a gentle, but a dignified interest in *her*, that never ceased to be remembered by Elizabeth in all the various passages of her life. She loved *him* with no ordinary force—she watched the last months of his existence with a serious, almost a sublime sentiment of reverence, subdued by pity. When he perished on the scaffold, her agony, her indignation were such, that her life was, at her tender age, almost endangered by the passion of her anguish. Still, he too died with the hope of his son's recovering his estates, by means with which Elizabeth ought not to clash—on that point, there was but one opinion.

When Lady Raleigh welcomed her niece to her “poor home,” as she called it, it was without the slightest surmise that the “chills and the heats,” and “the vapours,” and “the fevers,” on which Mistress Porter expatiated

in a long epistle, were connected with anything that had occurred so long ago as the sudden discovery in the Tower, that her son and his young cousin had loved each other imprudently. To the letter, Mistress Olive added sundry prescriptions of Sir Theodore Mayerne, which she had stored up, being originally given by that learned physician for various maladies, and now applied by Olive for disease in general—taking the diseases of mankind, as it were, by contract. The precious documents were old and worn, and Lady Raleigh was much more occupied in making them out, and in ascertaining whether her slender supply of medicines could furnish the particular ingredients, than in thinking of the cause of her niece's ailments.

It is true, that Olive said in her letter so much about "vapours," that when Elizabeth, one day arrived at her aunt's door, riding on horseback—for journeys were then seldom made in a carriage, except by the very great—and, alighting, fell almost fainting upon the doorstep, Lady Raleigh thought it her duty gently to reprove her.

"I trust my Elizabeth hath not contracted certain megrims of yon fine ladies of the

French Court," she said, offering, nevertheless, a cordial. "Hereabouts, my child, are real miseries: our poor folk be a many of 'em sick of a putrid fever, that carrieth off daily some half a score—that is what I esteem a true and pungent evil! Thou art better now?"

"Yes," replied Elizabeth, looking up into her aunt's face; "better with *thee*."

As she looked, a resemblance to Carew Raleigh, which was apparent even in that faded and altered face, gave Elizabeth a sharp pang. It was mastered, however, at once. Nevertheless, Lady Raleigh observed it.

"Wherefore dost thou gaze so pitifully at me?" she said, somewhat reproachfully; "thou little knowest how I have languished of late for company!—Thou wouldst be cheerful if thou knewest how many are my sad hours! Let us go within. When thou didst last come hither," resumed Lady Raleigh, struck by the almost emaciated countenance of her niece, "thou wert blithesome and blooming. What hath ailed thee? Hath any courtier behaved unseemly in making suit unto thee? Thou must challenge thy cousin, my Carew, to call him to account; for Carew, in that he is like soon to be married, can do that which a



bachelor could not, in decorum, undertake. If I but writ to him that thou art sick, he would come presently, even though his honeymoon be at hand; for he loveth thee, Elizabeth—as thou canst judge.”

“My dear aunt, I would not that thou write to him about me,” Elizabeth exclaimed, very earnestly. “Nor would I for the whole world disturb his—happiness.”

“Ah, dear child! Think what a solace to thy poor aunt’s sad heart, to know that he is sure to have such felicity in a wife. Rich, fair, and but four years older than my son—and that, with one so staid, and so discreet as he, is not too much. And now, Elizabeth, ’tis my chiefest desire to see thee wed: the Duke doth also entertain that desire, and hath writ to me as such.”

“Yet his Grace is kind,” replied Elizabeth, hastily. “He will not constrain my will: he hath said as much.”

“So! go unto thy chamber for awhile and rest thyself, whilst the Goody Dame Goble doth prepare our supper. We will not talk of these matters as yet.”

“Nor ever, dear aunt,” said Elizabeth, imploringly.

It was an autumnal afternoon. Foreign lands have their grand features of nature : their snow-clad mountains rising above the richest valleys ; the very sides of the hills clothed with the most luxuriant forest-trees ; the meadows beneath enamelled with gorgeous wild-flowers, such as the home-bred Englishman cannot hope to find in his native fields. Far away, in the wild fastnesses of the Tyrol, or in grander, yet not fairer Switzerland, the mountain-torrent sparkles and rushes into the clear and placid lake, lending its attributes of sound and movement to heighten every other charm. Scenes like these have grandeur—variety ; but the bond that harmonizes the landscape with man, that connects the charms of nature with the interests of humanity, is *all* English, and English alone.

Elizabeth sat down for a few moments by the latticed window, from which she saw, indeed, familiar and homely objects ; but they touched, they soothed, they enlivened the spirit. A cherry orchard, red with the ripe fruit, formed the humble foreground ; beyond, a malting-house, having its antique structure pointed : the smoke was issuing from its chimneys. In the space to the left, a hop-ground, partially cleared

of its graceful clusters, and stretching to the declivity of the hill above (in our days formed into a sort of park), was thickly beset with the labourers in that luxuriant harvest, mostly women. The reign of the smock-frock, which the learned historian has proved to be a very ancient costume, was at its height; the modest cap and the red cloak were then not disdained by the rural poor—the worst dressers in modern time of their class anywhere—in England.

The sounds of loud and cheerful talking mingled with the distant cawing of a rookery. These, too, had their charm for the stranger, sick of a town, sick of state and constraint, and of a vain shadow and a false show. The rich colouring of the fields, the lengthening shadows of the orchard and the hop-ground, were contrasted in the blue distance by the Weald of Kent; along which, as far as the eye might meet, rose a succession of massive timber trees, diversified by verdant glades.

The gushing stream of highland scenery, whether Scottish or continental, and the clear lake, were wanting, indeed, to perfect the scene; yet was it not all happiness!

“Henceforth,” said Elizabeth to herself,

"this shall be my home. Let another supply my place among the great, who will soon forget me. Here will I stay." How little could she foresee that it would be for her no abiding place!

"Aunt," she cried, throwing herself into Lady Raleigh's arms, as she went into the room below, "thou knowest not how I have yearned for some one to love me, as I was loved of old, when he—he—my uncle, did call me his child."

Lady Raleigh considered attentively the countenance and manner of her niece. Something she saw lay heavy on the spirits of Elizabeth. Of all the probable causes, the true one alone did not occur to her. She fancied that some rival might have vied in the Duchess's favour with the poor child; or, perhaps, some gallant of the Court have trifled with her happiness; or some mischief accrued from her intimacy with Lady Purbeck. Relations are sometimes blinded by their own wishes. Lady Raleigh had always desired that Elizabeth should cast off any lingering feeling for Carew, and she would not permit herself to think that it could be otherwise.

She spoke, therefore, often of her son. The certainty—now that he would soon be able to command wealth and influence, of his regaining Sherborne—was her frequent theme. Then Lady Raleigh fondly pictured to herself her husband's schemes of improvement: the plans which his rich fancy had constructed, even whilst he dwelt in the Tower, would be soon scrupulously carried out.

“It was a noble saying,” she remarked often to Elizabeth, as they sat together that evening, “a right noble saying of the Duke of Buckingham, when he refused to accept a gift of Sherborne from King James, that he would not be great upon another man's misfortunes. And now,” pursued Lady Raleigh, drawing towards her a spinning-wheel, her companion during many melancholy hours, and beginning to spin, “Carew will take counsel from his father's wholesome advice, which he hath left him *here*.” Lady Raleigh took from her pocket a little book, in manuscript. The leaves of that book were blotted with her tears in many places; the writing—none who had ever seen that of Sir Walter Raleigh, could doubt its authenticity—had that peculiar, that foreign

character, which marked his hand-writing. "These," said Lady Raleigh, in a low and solemn voice, "were fragments which the Lieutenant of the Tower spared me; for they were scattered here and there when I left the prison. *He* had already gone hence."

She paused, and looked into the little collection of immortal truths and precepts of wisdom, which under the simple appellation of "The Remains of Sir Walter Raleigh," were some years after his death given to the world.

"My son will never need a counsellor so long as he who sleepeth in peace speaketh to him—to us all—in this little book. 'Tis my companion; and I read it in my lonely evenings, and carry it with me into the fields. When I sorrow that he is not here, I meditate upon that letter which he writ to me from the Island of Saint Christopher, where our eldest son, Walter, was slain. 'I was loth to write, because I know not how to comfort you; and God knows, I never knew what sorrow meant until now.' Those were his words, Elizabeth." Lady Raleigh's voice faltered; she laid the book down. "Sorrow was his portion here; and that was but the beginning thereof. Had he but

been spared to see our youngest son prosper, I think he had been consoled for the death of our first-born."

Lady Raleigh, ere she had finished speaking, placed her foot on the spinning-wheel, and began to spin. It was a singular change, to pass at once from the hallowed memory of past griefs to the occupations of common life. But the avocation, too absorbing, too noisy also for conversation, tranquillized her thoughts.

Elizabeth looked with strange feelings on the delicate but rapidly declining frame bending, ever gently, always elegantly, over the wheel, the still beautiful profile which was turned to her, showing how complete was the abstraction for the moment. She started when the wheel stopped; and the deep silence of all around was again broken by her aunt's voice.

"Justice," Lady Raleigh resumed, as if answering her own thoughts, "Justice as well as mercy, doth exact that Sherborne should be ours. 'Tis well the time hath come. Hear, Elizabeth, what thy uncle hath writ to me, likewise. 'Twas the last letter his hand ever indited. 'My lands,' he saith, 'were conveyed (Sherborne, he meaneth) to my child.

The writings were drawn at Midsummer was twelve months, as divers can witness; and I trust my blood will quench their malice that desired my slaughter, that they will not also seek to kill you and yours with extreme poverty.' It hath not quenched it," continued Lady Raleigh, putting aside her spinning wheel, and looking, full of her own long pent-up thoughts, at her niece; "but God hath heard his prayer. We have never wanted bread; and one, generous and wealthy, hath now appeared ready to help us to regain our own. Ah!" she added, "how different her actions to theirs who left your uncle in the hour of his utmost need. 'To what friend—' these are his very words, writ to me, Elizabeth, in that same letter, 'to what friend to direct you, I know not; for all mine have left me in the true time of need.'" The widowed Lady Raleigh looked up to heaven, and sighed. "He who exhorted me to bear his destruction patiently, knoweth, assuredly, that I have done so; that his prayers for us were heard: my son hath found the friends that fate denied to his hapless father."

It was natural that the silent Elizabeth, listening to these reflections, should draw her own



conclusions: they were those of self-reproach. "What right had I, the poor child of their care and bounty, to interfere with his prosperous fortunes? Am I not culpable in my sorrow? May God chasten my selfish heart!" Such were her subjects of self-condemnation.

As the evening waned, sundry neighbours—some from the few scattered farms, others from Limpsfield—dropped in to see the new-comer, of whose gentleness and attractions they had heard so much from Lady Raleigh.

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